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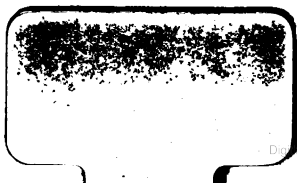
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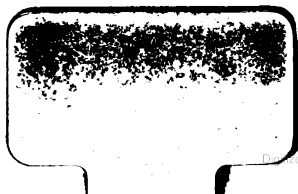
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# LETTERS TO A BRIDE,

BY



EMMA PESSINA.

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“ He for God only, she for God in him.”

*Paradise Lost, B. IV.*

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MDCCCXLVI.

**PALMER AND HOBY,  
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TO  
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY  
THE QUEEN DOWAGER  
THIS LITTLE VOLUME  
IS  
BY HER MAJESTY'S MOST GRACIOUS PERMISSION  
INSCRIBED  
WITH  
THE PROFOUNDTEST GRATITUDE  
AND  
THE UTMOST RESPECT  
BY  
HER MAJESTY'S MOST DEVOTED  
AND MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT  
THE AUTHORESS.

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# LETTERS TO A BRIDE.

## LETTER I.

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### ON WOMAN'S MISSION.

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How much I regret that the barrier which circumstances so long opposed to our mutual wishes should have been removed only to be replaced by another, as formidable, though far less hostile, to me! How much I wish that a longer time had intervened between your removal from the injudicious guidance of your step-mother and the absorbing duties, pains, and pleasures of married life! In any other case I should renounce, as hopeless, the task of weaning a young mind from frivolous employments, and rectifying its false views; but your affection for and confidence in me, as well as your superior intelligence,

offer me a sufficient guarantee that my time will not be lost, nor my counsels wasted on an unheeding ear; and your love for your husband will quickly impress you with the necessity of duly accomplishing the noble mission with which you are charged.

The precept I so early instilled into your mind of the dignity and importance of the female character in all countries enlightened by Christianity must be the first principle of your conduct as a wife. If I thought you incapable of appreciating this essential point I should have no hope of raising your mind above the most vulgar topics; but though your earlier youth has been squandered in exclusive attention to the duties of the toilette and the desire of securing a brilliant position in society, your mind is full of energy, and capable of noble impulses, which, well directed, will prove a source of solid happiness to yourself and those around you.

Inexperienced, full of enthusiasm and generosity, and rarely questioning their own hearts, women are constantly betrayed into errors, on their entrance into life, which tears of blood cannot afterwards efface. Hear me

patiently, then, though I say nothing new, nothing marvellous, nothing agreeable; my aim is to make the reflections of mature reason, and the experience of an eventful life, available to the promotion of your happiness.

In marriage, women of superior mind incur a double responsibility, especially where, as in your own case, both parties are young, and strong mutual affection is combined with easy, and even affluent, circumstances. Such is your influence, that *his* moral ruin or salvation are, in a great measure, in your hands: his time and thoughts will be for some time wholly yours, however unworthy you may be; and as you lead him, so he will follow you, whether it be to the frivolities which, reprehensible in you, would be contemptible in him, and cannot fail of undermining affection in both,—or to the nobler pursuits which, invigorating and elevating the mind, replace the delusions of the *honey-moon* by the more durable ties of rational friendship.

Shrink not from the task, then, through the indolence which assumes the specious form of humility: do not say “I am unable,” because the sacrifices you foresee render you

unwilling. Learn to consider yourself, not the tutor and guide of your husband, for this would be assuming an office which his good understanding and honourable mind would render superfluous to him, derogatory to you both—but the intellectual companion of his pains and pleasures, and the beacon of his voyage through life,—not guiding him, but rendering yourself so worthy of his affection that he may love to guide himself by you; for this magnetic power, accorded to woman for the noblest ends, derives not from any superiority we possess over men,—far from it; we are in mind, as in body, their inferiors,—but from the one mighty passion, which nature has implanted in our bosoms, and whose singleness gives it a force, both active and passive, which, when well directed, compensates to us for our natural weakness and elevates us above the mediocrity in which we should otherwise drag out our useless days. Happy is the woman who early meets a worthy object for her tenderness and devotion! Happier still if the holy font of maternal love be also opened to her!

“In woman the passion of love is, first

and last, imperious and fundamental, exclusive and *unique*. Subject to the laws of a refined and sensitive modesty (instituted not to diminish, but increase, its intensity and charm), it acts like the magnet, which, itself stationary, by its occult and irresistible emanations, attracts surrounding objects, and retains them within the sphere of its own action: and this peculiarity of love in woman is the source of the prodigious influence she is destined to exercise over mankind," and which she exerted, more or less, even in the infancy of her power, in the ages of almost universal heathenism; for it is Christianity,—that glorious triumph of spirit over matter, that conquest of light over darkness,—which has restored the fallen daughters of Eve to their rightful place in society. Alas! that they should not more readily accept their high responsibilities! Alas! that so many, even in the present age of refinement, should live and act as though they aspired to the harem of a sultan here, hereafter to the paradise of Mahomet!

" Goddesses, so blithe, so smooth, so gay,  
Yet empty of all good, wherein consists

Woman's domestic honour and chief praise ;  
Bred only and completed to the taste  
Of lustful appetence, to sing, to dance,  
To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye."

*Paradise Lost*, Book XI. 615.

For, under however special a semblance the truth be disguised, the woman who dedicates herself wholly to the adornment of her person or the preservation of her beauty, to the total neglect of her mind, misconstrues the real object of her mission on earth, as grossly, as fatally, as she who aims at becoming a mathematician or a *savante*, to the total neglect of the charms of her person. Our own age is rife in these extremes, of the folly of which a moment's reflection on the destiny of woman as compared with that of man will fully convince you.

"Man, born to a life of activity, is formed to experience passions of various kinds, in order that he may have a permanent stimulus to the accomplishment of each of the many parts he is called on to fill; and though, among his passions, love has, doubtless, an important place, it is rarely, if ever, the first or the only one which rules him," and is

more usually subservient to some other equally important to his real interests, equally inseparable from his moral responsibilities.

What, then, are the most opportune means of cherishing this only passion, of which *we* are the first object?

On the successful solution of this problem our happiness depends, and therefore has nature endowed us with the exquisite delicacy and quickness of perception, the fine tact, the ready intuition, necessary in each particular case.

As the direct tendency of female influence on society in general is to soften and refine the manners, to signalise the origin and progress of civilisation, so in individual cases the first and most acceptable sacrifice the weaker sex exacts from the stronger is the purification of the affections, without which woman would seek in vain to maintain, for any length of time, the empire her attractions will always assure to her for a season. It is the absence of this purity which renders so fleeting and uncertain the happiness of all connexions not sanctioned by the approbation of society; for it is morally impossible that a rightly con-

stituted mind should love with endurance where it cannot esteem.

Separate woman from purity of soul, and whether she be yoked with the ass to the plough as in China,\* or called "Bride of the sun and sister of the moon" as in the harems of the East, she is equally degraded; and her influence is as fleeting as it is pernicious, because it aims solely at the preservation of her own ascendant, regardless of the reaction on man. Beware, then, of over-estimating yourself or your office: however superior your endowments, however great your merit, however you may be beloved, beware of seeking to compress and extinguish all other passions of a generous tendency by which your husband's heart may be animated. When a woman succeeds in this fatal attempt, besides the irreparable mischief which accrues of seducing the beloved object into the betrayal of his supreme destinies on earth, the manly sentiments of which the germ in noble minds is indestructible will sooner or later revive in tumultuous agitation, and love will be sacrificed on the altar of remorse. While, then, by

\* *Neuhoff's Ambassade*, II., p. 50.

your secret influence, you soften the asperities of his character, and foster every humane and gentle feeling in his bosom, scorn to use your fears and weaknesses to warp him from the execution of his sterner duties. The woman who rightly appreciates her mission on earth will, with exquisite discernment, cherish the nobler passions of mankind—the love of our country, the love of truth and honour, the love of glory and of fame; and, far from combating their manifestations, she will promote them by her influence, reward them with her smiles, and so blend them with love itself, that man may feel them to be inseparable. Let the voice he loves echo back on his ear the calls of duty. Let the hand that caresses him present the sword which his country, or his honour, require him to draw. Let his dreams on your bosom be dreams of glory! What career, then, need startle you? What activity of life make you tremble for your influence? Are you not identified with his ambition, with his honour, with his life?

But the frivolous, the ignorant, the unprincipled woman may not aspire to this sublime companionship. Such a guerdon is

not reserved to levity, or even to contented mediocrity. She who would be the polar star of the man she loves must first respect herself, morally and intellectually—must first feel that she is worthy the love she would inspire; and, raising herself from the puerilities in which her sex are too apt to delight, she must become the companion, the “*help meet for man*,” not his doll, his plaything, nor his plague. She who contents herself with being the companion of his sensualities, more or less refined, his household drudge, or the mother of his offspring after the fashion of the brute creation, utterly fails in attaining this end. How many young wives, who bitterly complain of their husband’s want of confidence in them, or of his neglect, might more justly blame their own want of discretion, their levity and thoughtlessness, which renders them unworthy of all confidence; their trifling habits and uncultivated understandings, incapable of offering lasting attraction to persons of superior mind. The wife, wholly intent on hurrying from place to place to court the unchaste gaze of other men, leaving her children to the ignorance of servants, or to the ill-requited and worse

appreciated care of the governess, her household to neglect, and her husband to his grooms, his club, or his *friends*, differs from the concubine only in name—from the favourite of the harem, only in the effrontery with which she publishes her faithlessness.

Nor does she succeed better who avoids the glittering snares of worldly dissipation, but falls into the opposite extreme, and, neglecting both mind and person, reduces herself to the degrading condition of producing the species she cannot perfect—of bringing forth offspring she could not raise above the level of the brutes.

What wonder that the husband tires of the wife, when a few years of matrimony have metamorphosed the brilliant, amiable, and accomplished girl into the slovenly, peevish, domestic drudge, who, knowing no earthly interest beyond her servant's tattle, her children's teething, and her own complaints, rings eternal changes on her petty woes, and dissipates in fretful pining even the material charm of youth and freshness! A woman's vocation in her family is no more confined to bringing forth children and ordering dinners, than it

consists in squandering thousands, and attracting public attention. The exercise of conjugal and maternal affection should be combined with the cultivation of the mind, and the rational adorning of the person; and the wife who would see her influence outlive her youth must "adorn the spirit," which outlives beauty. Surely the contrast is sufficiently striking between the position of the intellectual companion and the *female*—between the wife and the concubine—to induce you to exert all the powers of your fine understanding in the correction of the errors of your education, and the acquisition of a due and beneficent influence over the mind of your husband. I reserve to the future the indication of the means to be employed for the attainment of that end.

Adieu !



## LETTER II.

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ON THE CULTIVATION OF THE MIND.

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NEGLECTED as your education has been, I have often wondered that the constant and minute care you were taught to bestow on your person never suggested to you that your understanding, your memory, your reasoning powers required and merited at least as much attention as your skin, your teeth, and your hair. How studiously you avoid an inelegant attitude, a harsh tone of voice, a negligent attire ! but did it never occur to you that the mind is even more susceptible of contracting bad habits than the body ? How hard it would have been to persuade you, even to attain some worthy end, to consign one of your limbs to the pernicious influence of total inaction ; and how readily you would have foreseen that it would wither, shrink, and finally

become useless ! Yet no such presentiment agitated you concerning your understanding, so long abandoned to utter neglect ! Happily the hour for its regeneration has struck. You feel that existence should have some other end than the refined sensualities of the toilette, the table, and the ball-room—that a being endowed with a soul should be ill content to kneel down and worship the body. You feel that physical enjoyments leave the nobler appetites unsatisfied, and that it is at best but a miserable policy to render ourselves dependent on that “tabernacle of clay” which each day deteriorates and perishes, to the neglect of the spirit which exercise enlarges and ennobles.

The span of a few brief years must ever limit the reign of beauty and pleasure, while the longest life is often insufficient to destroy or even dim the faculties developed in youth, perfected in maturity.

That you should cultivate your mind *for the glory of God* I cannot yet hope ; but far above the recompense of personal happiness which I hold out to you, you will place the hope of being useful in your generation, of advocating and adorning in your little circle

the cause of truth and virtue. There is much false humility abroad in the world. All are ready to say, when called on to make the smallest sacrifice of time, money, or inclination to the public good, or for the sake of example, that they have no weight, no influence, that they are ciphers in society, persons whose example can be of no importance to any one. Let not this flimsy veil conceal from your observation the indolent egotism of their real motives. All are more or less influential in the circle in which they move, and in the honeycomb construction of society, no one of whose hexagonal cells exists independently of its immediate neighbours. A woman's influence extends ordinarily over her family and household, and, according to circumstances, over her circle of society, place of residence, and neighbourhood. Some even, like Cleopatra, have decided the fate of nations; others, like Madame de Maintenon, have ruled the greatest monarchs; others, like Joan of Arc, have vanquished whole hosts, and established kings upon their thrones. But woman's sphere is not in public life; her glory is in silence and obscurity; and of the many great and cele-

brated women whose names are scattered on the page of history, how few have been virtuous, modest, truly feminine ! How few have fulfilled their true mission upon earth ! How often, from Athalia to Olympia, from Olympia to Maria Theresa, have they drawn the swords they should have sheathed, and caused or fomented the dissensions it should have been their glory, as it is their vocation, to extinguish ! Aspire, then, to no celebrity beyond that which feminine and retiring merit may support without quitting its modest shade. Extend your influence wherever it may be beneficial ; and remember it can only be really so while it is virtuous, gentle, unpresuming—resembling the bashful violet which, unseen, sheds around its fragrance. And, in order that your influence may be judicious, cultivate your mind ; aim at excellence in all that you undertake, and, consequently, *undertake but little*. Let not your memory resemble the *programme* of studies in a French school, where the names alone of twenty different sciences, and a dozen languages and accomplishments, appear in crude array.

Sciences, strictly speaking, are not adapted

to the delicate and flexible organisation of woman's mind; they require greater precision, steadier application, profounder study than she is capable of; and while I would not refuse you the elegant studies of botany or conchology, if your taste for them were very decided, I would beseech you never to dabble in chemistry, geology, or mechanics. Woman should be satisfied with such studies as are calculated to improve her own mind and enable her better to fill her place in society, without encroaching on those whose chief object is the progress of science and the establishment or rectification of abstract theories.

Remember that the scope of woman's studies is not to illustrate science or enlighten mankind, but to make her a meet companion for her husband, an intelligent preceptress for his children, partaking the intellectual recreations of his leisure hours, directing the earlier studies of his sons, *the whole* education of his daughters.

You received, in your childhood, the outlines of education, the elementary principles of history, geography, arithmetic, grammar, &c., &c.; but this, though sufficient to prevent

your committing gross errors in the commonest conversation, is as useless to all other purposes as the foundation stone, laid deep in the earth, but crowned by no superstructure.

Far more serious application, more consistent plans, more enlarged views are necessary to raise you above the share of national and individual prejudice inherent in all, and preserve you from a narrow-mindedness similar to that of the ancients in their use of the word "barbarian"—a general term with them, alike of distinction and contempt for all other nations.

Education may be divided into two important branches—instruction, properly so called; and the cultivation and training of the mind to right principles, correct judgment, and liberal views; the former developing the perceptive faculties, the latter the reasoning powers; both fortifying and exercising the memory, that handmaid of the soul, and chastening and directing her stimulants, the passions.

Woman, usually endowed with active and rapid perception, will embrace facts with

avidity, and retain them with facility; but properly to digest them, and draw useful and improving inferences from them, will be her more difficult task. These two branches of education should never be separated, or the reading of all the books in the world will have little more effect on young and irreflective minds, than their contents have on the library shelves where they repose.

Nothing, in fact, contributes more fatally to the growth of empty vanity and self-sufficiency than the pernicious method of cramming young heads with isolated facts, unaccompanied by inference, or analysis of causes and effects—such glossaries of crime, turbulence, and ambition, as are too often admitted as elementary works under the title of *abridged histories*.

If in study our progress does not tend to convince us that we know nothing, we may be sure we are in a wrong path; either our studies are ill chosen, or the manner of pursuing them is defective, and we had better close our book for ever than continue to imbibe error or vanity from its perusal.

But more than general rules are necessary

for your guidance, therefore let me descend to particulars.

Your taste will, I know, dispose you strongly in favour of history; and this predilection is in itself a host. The study of history, rightly understood and directed, embraces almost the whole circle of information necessary to your sex. Let not want of time, that unfailing pretext of the idle, induce you to commence your own education by abridgments, whose proper use, if they have any, is to refresh the memory after the perusal of voluminous works. Give the preference to the history of your own country, commencing at the remotest period, and observing the changes of religion, the formation of the constitution, the progress of arts and sciences, the transitions of the language, the phases of society, and the march of civilisation, with more interest than the names and ages of kings, the days on which they died, the myriads of their subjects they gave over to the sword, or the number of their splendid follies. In your choice of authors, lean chiefly towards those who take the most philosophical and liberal views of the subjects of which

they treat—a merit of more importance to woman's studies than chronological or statistical exactitude. Read sparingly of those who avow themselves "simple compilers," disclaiming a knowledge of the character of the times in which they wrote.\* A necessary caution previous to reading profitably any book whatever is to learn something of the character, opinions, and social position of the author; never delivering over your reason to the guidance of any but the most approved and venerable authorities on points of moral or religious doctrine. Be especially wary of receiving the morality of the historians and philosophers of the last century, or of accrediting the authority of authors who, in any age, have written the history of their own times, or treated questions of strong party interest; for their opportunities for knowing the truth, and their temptations to flattery and liabilities to error, are equally numerous. You are prepared to meet with scepticism in Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon; but guard against the *intolerance* of all three, though professed *free thinkers*; against the exclusive admiration of Roman

\* *Hallam's Middle Ages*, note 1, ch. I.

grandeur predominant in Gibbon, and the conformity even of Hume to the levity of his time. Endeavour to read with impartial coolness the invectives of Protestants against Catholics, and *vice versâ*; as well as all sentiments dictated by party spirit and religious controversy. Never read history without books of reference—classical, biographical, theological, and geographical dictionaries, chronological tables, and good maps; and disdain not to apply constantly to Johnson and Richardson for the precise meaning and derivation of every word which is not perfectly familiar to you.

Make notes as you proceed, for the assistance of your memory, of the principal facts and dates, and still more of the connexion of causes and effects in historical transactions, and of the ideas and sentiments which strike you as peculiarly just or peculiarly erroneous: finally, limit your studies to a duration of two consecutive hours at most. In this manner the study of history will comprehend a vast fund of varied yet harmonious information; and your acquirements, keeping pace with each other, will be of mutual utility.

The desultory manner in which too many persons are in the habit of reading the Bible, and the prevalent feeling that it is a rule of faith rather than a monument of history, are sources of astonishing ignorance as regards the Jewish history, even among persons otherwise well-informed, who know little more of Scripture history than what they learn in the concise and interrupted sketch of it contained in the Sunday lessons appointed for the Church Service, and who would be quite at a loss to explain the connexion of Sacred and Profane History, or the religious and historical difference between Judaism and Christianity. Apart from all religious sentiments, the Bible is at once the most ancient and authentic historical document in existence, and the most interesting monument of a literature that is no more, and, as such, deserves a special and careful study.

The Pentateuch forms a consecutive history of the seed of Abraham up to about two thousand years before Christ, with the exception of the repetition of the Law, contained in the book of Leviticus. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings con-

tinue the history to the Captivity, to which the touching episode contained in the book of Esther refers. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah treat of the return from Babylon, and the intervention of Cyrus for the restoration of the temple and worship of the living God. David and Solomon are the authors of the greater part of the Psalms, the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon : and the prophets refer in irregular order to the events coeval with, and subsequent to, the Captivity. Malachi, the last of the prophets, lived about four hundred years before Christ ; so that a hiatus occurs between the last book of the Old Testament and the first of the New, which may be filled up by reading the history of Judea under the successors of Alexander, till the "sceptre departed from Judah" and Shiloh came. The historical evidence of the New Testament, opening with the birth of Christ under Augustus, is contained in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles, (the Epistles being chiefly doctrinal); and the prophecies scattered more or less through the whole of the sacred writings are crowned by

the Apocalypse, or Revelation of St. John. Reading the Bible in this order, and with a strict view to historical information, you will obtain a sufficiently clear notion of the "people of God" to prevent your falling into the error of an accomplished Italian lady, who, on hearing it asserted that Christ and his Apostles were Jews, and that Christianity is but the maturity of Judaism, exclaimed, with pious horror, "*Holy Virgin! what a dreadful heresy!*"

You will perhaps fancy I circumscribe your first studies too much in limiting them to Sacred and Profane History; but remember that, according to the method I prescribe, it comprises as much of Mythology, Chronology, Philology, and Theology, as a woman need know, with the most interesting parts of Biography and Geography. A good history will notice the progress of the arts and sciences during the period of which it treats, and thus the solid part of education may be all derived from the study of History, properly directed and combined.

But do not imagine I wish to make a *savante* of you: observe, that I only require *two hours a day* for reading; and those two

hours well-employed will suffice in a couple of years, to instruct and form your mind, always supposing that you co-operate with all that puissance of will with which nature endows all young and passionate beings.

Having told you what mental food I recommend, I must not forget also to prohibit; and, as simple prohibitions are calculated rather to inflame curiosity than to produce obedience, I will endeavour to speak directly to your reason, and prove to a demonstration why *sentimentalism*, in prose or verse, is eminently detrimental to young and ardent minds like your own.

As reasoning is the art of balancing the passions, and making them subservient to our good, so the attainment of this just balance is the very acmé of moral perfection. We are all by nature so constituted as to be more especially under the influence of some passions by our individual character,—of others, as incident to our age and sex. These passions lead us to seek precisely that which would tend to develope and increase them; thus destroying the balance of reason, whose office it is to resist and correct this depravity of moral appetite,

and endeavour to make all our occupations contribute to the establishment of that equilibrium, without which our conduct becomes extravagant, our understanding impotent. The natural tendency of all young persons, and especially of young women, is to exaggerate and over-rate all that springs, directly or indirectly, from the passion of love,—its hopes, fears, and sorrows, as well as the happiness it is capable of conferring.

Guided and tempered by reason, this tendency (which they owe to their moral and physical coformation) may be made subservient to many excellent purposes; but, over-excited by the perusal of works which unduly exalt the empire of the affections, it becomes a fertile source of misery and misconduct. Nor will you be disposed to doubt this, when you reflect that the passions, implanted for working mighty effects under the control of reason, become in such cases rebellious and ungovernable, and are wholly under the influence of a fevered and diseased imagination. All works that tend to fire and disorder the fancy are pernicious, and can only be read with impunity by persons in advanced life, who, generally

speaking, ridicule them ; while they are devoured by those who are in too many cases already the victims of morbid sensibility.

And even where romance writers, like Scott, for instance, have avoided the train of false sentiment which so usually pervades such writings, and the indirect immorality of exciting our liveliest sympathies for those whose conduct merits only our contempt, one and all make Love, with its joys and griefs, the burden of their song ; and as every-day realities would excite little or no interest, they weave plots of more or less extravagance and improbability ; thereby indisposing the minds of their younger readers to a just appreciation of the society in which they are to move, by leading them to expect adventures and heroes at every step. There is scarcely a medium to be expected in the moral influence of literary productions ; and those from which nothing is to be gained can seldom fail of being baneful.

With respect to poetry the case is different : our language possesses peculiar beauties, and our poetry peculiar merits, which you will do well to study, comparing the English with the Italian and French Poets ; for if you read only

the poetry of one language, you will form but an imperfect idea of its charms. Many persons, and particularly those who possess a musical ear, read poetry with enthusiasm, and derive enjoyment they know not why, from the harmony of the versification, without being able to form the slightest idea of the source of its merits. Without proposing to you a profound study of versification, I would advise you to read some short essay on the subject, an acquaintance with which will greatly enhance your enjoyment in the reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost and Regained*, and all his other poems (which I recommend first to your attention), Dr. Beattie's *Minstrel*, Burns' Poems, Thomson's *Seasons*. Read Young, Rogers, and Campbell in moderation, Shakspeare without restriction, in spite of a license of language too coarse to be corrupting. Moore and Byron I would, for the present, entirely forbid,—less on account of the enervating voluptuousness of the former, or the insidious immorality of the latter, than the morbid sentimentalism peculiar to both. Childe Harold is the only exception I will make, but when you are my age you will read all the productions of both these favoured sons

of genius with infinite gratification, and without any danger to your own mind.

The plan of reading I have traced out for you contains all that is materially necessary to the cultivation of your mind; the constant acquisition of knowledge, and the examination of new topics, will develope your perceptive faculties: while meditation on what you have read—the comparison of causes and effects—the philosophy, in fact, of history—will rectify and strengthen your intellect and powers of reasoning; and the beneficial influence of such cultivation will be experienced in the ascendant mind will acquire over matter, thus chastening and subduing the passions. But I must not quit the subject without saying a word on a part of education that has absorbed so many hours of your childhood and youth—I mean the arts. The modern system of education on this point would lead the uninitiated to suppose that every young lady in tolerably easy circumstances possesses by hereditary right a great talent for each of the arts in particular. Parents and children are alike under the impression that *for so much a lesson* the arts of Raphael, Pasta, Thalberg, or

Taglioni may be acquired by all. In one case alone do I see any excuse for the folly of forcing young persons to the study of arts in which mediocrity is ludicrous, perfection unattainable, unless as a free gift of nature; and that is when a peculiar combination of circumstances favours the choice of such or such an art as a means of subsistence.

The influence of the fine arts, in elevating the mind to the contemplation of beauty in the abstract, is of secondary importance in the present age of mature civilization and refinement; and, as proficiency in them is not essentially necessary to their intelligent appreciation, none should be studied to which natural bias does not propel us. A master talent will never remain long undiscovered, and, when manifested, should be cultivated with the grateful assiduity which nature's munificent endowments ever merit; but short of this decided superiority, do not aim at excelling with cold predetermination, particularly in the arts which necessitate display, and in which mediocrity is unpardonable. You know enough of painting, music, and dancing, to frequent exhibitions of these arts with pleasure, and to

make the former your recreation in place of the noisy bustle of worldly amusements. Vanity is so often the only incentive to the acquisition of accomplishments, that it is no wonder mortification is so often their only recompense; but this would lead me to speak of *motives of actions* in general, a subject which I will reserve to a future letter.

Vivete felice !



## LETTER III.

## ON MOTIVES OF ACTION.

SELF-EXAMINATION, or the scrutiny of the heart, is one of the beauteous fruits of Christianity. Polytheism, like all creeds of human invention, confined its empire to external forms, and when its votaries complied with these all was well. *Nosce te ipsum*—Know thyself—said Socrates to his disciples, five hundred years before Christ; but he spoke not to individuals of their own hearts,—he reminded the sovereign people of Athens of their irresistible power; and it is doubtful whether the wise Athenian was aware of the importance of his own precept, in its individual application. Christianity alone, rising above the letter of the law, has penetrated the sanctuary of man's conscience, and announced her Divine origin by the fiat, "*Whosoever looketh on a woman to*

*lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart."* And though it is not my intention to propose to you the censorship of your own motives as a religious duty,—esteeming the difference between us on that subject as yet too great; nevertheless, in leading you step by step up the ladder of moral excellence—whose topmost round I already foresee you attaining—I would avail myself of every light which the progress of science, or the course of ages, has revealed, and call in the succour not only of Socrates, Plato, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, but of Paley, Fenelon, Pascal, Locke, Milton, Newton, and last, though not least, of Peter and of Paul. The time is not far distant when you will think less lightly of religion than you now do; for that self-same hour which sees you a mother will awaken in your heart the cry of Mary, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" then all you now learn, all you now acquire, will receive new and immortal lustre from the light of grace within: then, and then alone, will you know the full value of the motive to the action; for as to the

wicked all things are sin, so to the righteous *all things are Prayer*. In the mean time, let me endeavour to show you the moral importance of right motives to your earthly happiness.

All things have their *metronome*; science has its principles, art its rules, commerce its usages, religion its creed, verse its measure, music its gamut, language its syntax, nature her immutable laws and instinct; the conduct of man alone has no fixed rule of action; and alternately guided by superstition—(for true religion is consistent)—interest, honor, cupidity, fear, self-love, expediency, and, too often, by chance, his inconsistency renders him fully as contemptible as he is miserable. The greatest evil of wrong motives by no means consists in the wrong actions they instigate; their presence discolours the whole tissue of the ideas and opinions; and the existence of one false principle in the mind is the germ which fertilizes a thousand others; “for if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

It has been said that “he who fixes upon

false principles treads upon infirm ground, and so sinks; he who fails in his deductions from right principles stumbles upon firm ground, and so falls.”\* But from such falls it is comparatively easy to rise again; while they who tread the quagmire of false principles sink to perdition. In the former case, the foundation is good, though the superstructure may be defective; in the latter, the foundation being unsound, no art can give solidity to the fabric. A right or a wrong motive constitutes frequently the only difference between vice and virtue, especially in those cases of which the arm of justice, and the still severer scourge of public censure, can take no cognisance; and as in the body those diseases are most fatal whose seat is most occult, so such offences being necessarily exempt from all outward penalty, their commission is expiated, morally speaking, by the corruption and debasement of the soul.

Egotism is usually the motto of such actions,—the tree which bears those “apples of Sodom, fair without, but foul within, and ashes to the taste:” and though woman is

\* *South*, vol. ii., Sermon 1.

usually less accessible to this gangrene of the heart than man, it is yet needful that you should be prepared to recognise it, in all its protean forms, lest it should glide, noiseless and unseen, among the flowers of your happy Eden: and as woman is never so graceful or so charming as when all her sentiments, words, and actions are strictly feminine, so be particularly on your guard against this most unfeminine of all vices. Do not let the hue and cry against romance induce you to suffocate, or even disown, the noble and generous motives proper to your age and sex. Take encouragement from the words of our favourite Madame de Staël:—" *Quand on a tourné l'enthousiasme en ridicule, on a tout défait, excepté l'argent et le pouvoir.*" And many you will find to repeat to you that all else is nought; some in ignoble sordidness of heart, others repeating, parrot-like, the principles which sound to them like "*practical common sense,*" but whose debasing consequences they would shrink from with horror.

Gold—personal advantages—are the idols to which all abstract truth, and many of the finer instincts of our nature are sacrificed by

these utilitarians, on the egotistic principle of despising everything to which immediate personal interest does not impel us. The just medium, so difficult to attain in all things, is not even aimed at in this; and incredulity of all that experience has not rendered doubly sure is mistaken for enlightened sagacity. What would the state of science now have been, had the learned always confined themselves to studies of immediate practical utility?—had egotism arisen at the outset of every abstract research with the paralysing *veto* contained in the question, so echoed and re-echoed in the present day, "*What is the use of it?*" "That all men, that all nations, should aspire to material advantages is a general law, common to all countries, to all times, to all social conditions, but peculiar to the age in which we live, is the fatal tendency to make *gold* the unique end, the sole scope, of every project, of every effort, of every sacrifice;"\* and the confinement of Solomon de Caus as a madman in the hospital of Bicêtre, near Paris, for having *importuned* the Cardinal

\* Speech of the Marquis of Pietracatella at the Scientific Congress of Italy, 1845.

Richelieu to patronise his discovery of the power of steam,\* is but a modification according to the times, of the persecution and imprisonment of Galileo, for the crime of having so much surpassed his age; and both are instances of shortsighted egotism in its grossest form, trampling on bold genius and dawning science, *because* it holds out no golden bait, no ready recompense, or because self-sufficient mediocrity hates those whose very superiority teaches them that man has yet much to learn.

“History attests,” says the learned Cantù, “that the most important practical applications have derived from theories laid down centuries before-hand in purely scientific intentions, and founded on researches after truth—that idol of the human mind; . . . . . and the sailor, saved from shipwreck by the precision of longitudinal calculations, owes his life to a theory invented two thousand years ago by men of genius wholly intent on abstract geometrical speculations.” In such cases, egotistic indifference to all not immediately advantageous

\* Letter of Marion Delorme to Cinq Mars, 3d February, 1641. The Marquis of Worcester, regarded as the inventor of steam engines, mentions the discovery of Solomon de Caus in a work entitled *Century of Inventions*, 1663.

to ourselves, shows itself in a plausible but easily distinguishable form. Rectify the motive—replace the sordid love of gain by the noble love of truth—and the action will be modified, if not wholly altered. The just medium between universal scepticism and blind credulity would, in many cases, be the result of right motives of action.

With reference to our own internal peace, one of the strongest incentives to purity of motive is the nice balance which exists between rectitude of intention and self-approbation. Conscience is the subtlest of metaphysicians; and when we allow the opinion of the world, expediency or selfishness, to be our incentives to any action, we invariably have our recompense. We have done right, but it was on a wrong principle; and all the sophistry of our hearts is insufficient to stifle “the still small voice,” which says of all such, “Verily, I say unto you, *they have their reward.*”

Examine your own bosom after an act of modesty prompted by the desire of approbation—after a charity bestowed to escape importunity—after a sacrifice made to avoid exposure or discussion—after a truth defended for

the sake of display—after an act of devotion performed in mere conformity to custom—and tell me, do you find there the honest, tranquil self-esteem which would have followed those actions had humility, charity, self-denial, honesty, piety been their several motors? All around may smile approval, but

“ The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

Mingled or impure motives may give rise to some, to many, apparently good actions; but the fountain, polluted at its source, can send forth but troubled waters, and inconsistency will ever mark the conduct of those who are not unwilling to do right, but labour under the delusion that it is easier and pleasanter to do so on wrong principles.

Without a habit of rigorous self-examination you will never arrive at even a superficial knowledge of your own motives, without which your progress through life will be but a blind groping over a broad way, whose stumbling-blocks are plain and manifest to all save yourself; for no one can know anything of human nature, with its virtues, vices, and

foibles, who does not begin by the study of his own heart.

We are all too apt to judge ourselves by our outward actions, which, through fear of the world, are often harmless and even commendable—"whited sepulchres"—while within all is rottenness and corruption. We think that when we pass through life blameless, fulfilling with decency the most imperative duties, that we have given good proof of an excellent heart and an upright mind. Alas ! if we would only strip the veil from the selfish, impure, and ofttime degrading motives of this fair conduct, where would our self-love hide itself ? How often would it be found that care for our reputation has been the safeguard of our chastity—love of health the motive of our sobriety—hope of an inheritance the root of our affections and charities towards our neighbour. Yet, all tainted with this corruption at the fountain head, we dare stand up with shameless brow, and, boasting of having "*done our duty*," offer our *good works* to Him who *searcheth the heart* !

Many a moral canker would be extirpated if we applied seriously to our own hearts the

pitiless scrutiny we exercise on others, the inflexible severity we shew to their faults.

To this profitable purpose you may turn the cynical writings of many great and learned men, whose misguided aim was to calumniate human nature in the mass. Hume, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, De la Rochefoucault (with many others), intent on portraying mankind in the blackest colours, have unwittingly provided inestimable manuals for the exercise of self-examination ; and taxing your own heart with the iniquities they attribute *to* all, and searching it with their sceptical mistrust *of* all, you will not only counteract the pernicious tendency of their writings, but draw from them incalculable advantages. Thus intent on truth, the mind performs an alchymy which obtains the purest gold from the basest metals, and possesses the true philosopher's stone of study ; and even in this case, it is the motive which assigns their real character to your pursuits, and prescribes their effect. The same works, which read with a view to self-examination and self-improvement may be made subservient to the highest purposes, would prove to the last degree baneful if taken up from idle

curiosity and devoured in superficial haste. So great is the importance of right motives to our conduct, that he who would be happy must not admit an exemption even for the most trifling action of every-day life; such is the acknowledged force of habit that Paley has defined "the exercise of virtue and the guilt of vice *to consist in the formation of our habits.*" In all, then, we should be guided by fixed and solid principles; for the most painful sacrifices are made without a thought where habit has once subdued the rebellion of the will. Accustom yourself in the most trivial circumstances to interrogate your own heart on its motives; and above all other evils, beware of the specious sophistry of self-indulgence which, if yielded to, steeps the soul in lethargy, and strikes at the root of all moral and intellectual progress, by benumbing its energies, and giving it over to sloth and apathy.

Be as tenderly sparing of pain, fatigue, and vexation to others as you are inflexibly severe in inflicting them on yourself, whenever the justice or propriety of the step to cause them is once decided in your mind. Such is the

force of habit in this particular, that he who accustoms himself incessantly to consult his own feelings enervates his mind to such a degree that every foreseen annoyance becomes an insurmountable obstacle to his undertakings ; and the path in which the courageous and the self-denying advance with steady progress is choaked with thorns for the dupe of self-indulgence. Whatever, then, be the subject in question, ask yourself not whether it is agreeable, but whether it is advisable—not whether it is pleasant, but whether it is right ; and the daily victories you will thus obtain over a host of petty weaknesses will so fortify and elevate your mind, that the foolish annoyances which ruffle the composure of the frivolous will pass by you unperceived ; and, like the summit of some lofty mountain, you will see many a thunderstorm burst below you, while your own atmosphere continues untroubled and serene.

Enervated by self-indulgence, and inflated by self-importance, we attach the most absurd value not only to exemption from all pain but to the daily gratification of the most abject appetites and desires ; so that the folly or

indiscretion of our companions, the unskilfulness of our servants, even the inconstancies of climate, have each a legion in arms against the tranquillity of the deluded Sybarite, who has placed his whole happiness in an alternation of enjoyment and repose. Hence we see a (*so called*) friendship die a violent death for some breach of etiquette—the peace of a family troubled by an over-cooked joint—or a fit of hysterics produced by a shower of rain!

And to so pitiable a state does the habitual consideration of our own ease insensibly lead the mind, that the result of accepting self-indulgence as a lawful principle of action is not only the omission of every painful duty, and the commission of every pleasant fault, but the abasement of the mind to the level of every casual annoyance, leaving it defenceless, and stripped of all moral courage—totally at the mercy of every storm.

The purity of motive and rectitude of principle I have so warmly advocated are not only the sole preservatives from innumerable disappointments, and the best guarantee of worldly happiness to those who have not “their treasure in heaven,” but they are the only sure

remedy against the contemptible inconsistency which marks the conduct of so many very amiable persons. Where the principle is single the conduct is ever uniform ; but where the fear of God and man, selfishness and generosity are alternate agents, what wonder that the outward bearing is inconsistent, incomprehensible—the man, absurd and contemptible? Having no compass whereby to steer his bark across the ocean of life, he vainly trusts to every *ignis fatuus* which meets his sight ; and thrice happy may he consider himself if the absurdity of his conduct is the worst result of so foolhardy an undertaking. Difficulties necessarily multiply to those who have not one guide but many, not one trusty counsellor but a dozen tyrannical masters ; and those who would act in one case from religious feeling, in another from wordly expediency, and in a third from capricious generosity, are ever at a loss what course to pursue, ever “ halting between two opinions.” Even the salutary influence of our best and purest affections leads to inconsistency and vice, where those affections are misconstrued.

Remember, as an invariable rule, that un-

due indulgence towards others proceeds directly from egotism, and never from enlightened goodness of heart. . Whatever severity circumstances may require, and however painful that severity may be, there is more real kindness in its exercise than in unjust lenity, whether it be shown towards the actions or the opinions of those under your influence. If friends, children, servants, dependants require reprimand, and you pass over their fault through dislike of giving pain, be sure there is more selfishness than true benevolence in your motive,—*Car, nul ne merite d'être loué de sa bonté, s'il n'a pas la force d'être méchant* : and though a constant sense of your own frailty should preserve you from arrogance of manner or unbecoming harshness, yet Solomon says, " There is a time to wound and a time to make whole ;" and you wrong those whose errors you perceive without correcting them.

In like manner, the expression of false principles, immoral ideas, or irreligious sentiments should never be tolerated by you in silence ; the simplest, briefest protestation against them is sufficient, but silence is cul-

pable, especially when the opinions expressed are among the many of a pernicious tendency on which the world is prone to smile.

If you turn your mind to study, let it be for the love of study, and not for the sake of display, in which case your superficial knowledge will be easily perceptible and your vanity will receive innumerable and well-merited mortifications. If you court the world in any way, let the motive be good. An honourable ambition—a desire to attain social positions in which you conscientiously hope to be extensively useful, as well as the pursuit of temporal advantages for those you have undertaken to protect, may boldly be avowed as upright and laudable motives for courting the world, *to a certain degree*.

If you perform acts of devotion, let it be for the love of God ; and do not fear boldly to say so, whatever fashion may prescribe : if, on the contrary, you have only the far inferior motive of setting example to others, bear this truth in mind,—that while our own hearts are often lulled into fatal security by such practices, man is seldom duped by them—God, never.

If you are charitable, let it be, if not from the love of God, at least from the love of your fellow-creatures, and never from ostentation, lassitude of importunity, conformity to the world, or hope of thanks. Such sacrifices are "an abomination in His sight;" and we offend enough by our sins, without offering the mockery of hypocritical "good works." So long as your own motive in alms-giving is good, avoid being over-scrupulous on all occasions as to the motives of others in asking your aid for the poor and the needy. The selfish and the worldly, loose and heedless in all else, 'examine narrowly the *motive* of a charity—the *principle* of a work of beneficence—the *worthiness* of its object—hoping to find all wrong, and thereby to have a decent pretext for refusing the trifle they would rather squander on self.

Finally, purity of motive is its own reward. Among those who will ridicule your high-flown ideas, acting themselves, as they fancy, with profound wisdom and worldly prudence, there will be many who will fall victims to the disappointments you will escape; while they will often lead others to wish that wrong motives

produced no worse consequence than their own defeat. The reason is most evident. The aim of all wrong motives is, either undue credit for our conduct, or undue personal advantage to be reaped from our actions; in the former case we place our peace of mind entirely at the mercy of the world—often more perspicacious in its judgments than we had prepared ourselves to expect; in the latter (equally uncertain of success) we are in many cases sure of the disapprobation of our own conscience.

In your self-denial, your moderation, your sobriety, your charity—in your whole conduct—instead of contending for the prize of supremacy or admiration in the world (prizes ever awarded to the few, to the exclusion of the many), strive only to attain and preserve that purity and singleness of motive which is its own reward. To the natural man no higher stimulus, no nobler ambition can be proposed, than this purification of the heart for the love of truth, no higher recompense than the self-esteem arising from the consciousness of having acted according to the eternal laws of justice; but the Christian, with sublime humility, lays down at the foot of the cross

his highest attainments and his brightest virtues, saying with Paul, "What things were gain to me, those count I loss for Christ." May the day soon come in which you shall be constrained to say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"



## LETTER IV.

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ON THE USE OF WEALTH.

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AN Indian proverb says, "all that thou hast beyond the needful belongs to others." Are you prepared for the practical application of this stern doctrine? But let me hasten to comment on it, lest you should fear I mean to reduce you to the black broth and savage frugality of Spartan manners, which, though not without merit, it was a merit peculiar to the age and locality, and even then gave rise to the comparison, that while the Spartans knew how to despise death and die for their country, the Athenians knew how to enjoy life and live for theirs. \*

You know my somewhat singular but sincere dread of riches for those whose treasure should consist in intellectual enjoyments; those who, enriched by nature with superior

intelligence, have sources of delight so many, so varied, and so exquisite at their command, that they may well dispense with the vulgar routine of fashionable hard labour, rightly called pleasure by those to whom a more refined taste has been refused. Thus it was with much uneasiness that I heard of your "brilliant match," that I saw you leave your father's simple mansion to take possession of your husband's lordly domain; and that, not because the goods of fortune are in themselves hurtful, but because it is more difficult to exercise moderation in prosperity than fortitude in adversity.

The undue importance attached in this country to parade and show generates, as an infallible consequence, that respect for the *possession* of wealth which of right belongs to its proper *employment*, and were such an idea consonant with the thoughtlessness of your age, and the generosity of your character, your education could not have failed to convert you to the worship of Mammon; but happily on this ground I have to build, not destroy. I have no golden calf to throw down previous to laying the foundation of my temple of

truth,—the page is virgin, and on it I would write the simple precept, *use, and abuse not*.

No one has a better right than I have to tell you how little happiness depends on riches. Born to affluence, and lulled for the first twenty years of my life in the egotistic doze of luxury, providence saw fit to reduce me, for a time, to poverty; and I do not tell you that this reverse increased my happiness at the time, or was even easy to endure:

“The flesh *will* quiver where the pincers tear.”

But poverty first acquainted me with a kingdom whose inhabitants are “poor, yet making many rich, having nothing, and yet possessing all things:” poverty first incited me to mental exertion, and the full use and enjoyment of my half-dormant faculties,—the cultivation of the talent I should otherwise have hidden in the earth; my health, till then so fragile and delicate, became robust under the influence of the unremitting bodily fatigue which might have been expected to impair it still further; while my heart received ample compensation for much suffering, in the friendship and sympathy of the few who really loved me;—

for adversity is the winnow which separates the chaff from the wheat, while the noon-tide glare of prosperity not only prevents our distinguishing friends from foes, but disables the sweetest offices of friendship, and renders our hearts callous to their charms.

For my own part then I can testify that I knew more pure, more real happiness in the days of my poverty than I did in the days of my wealth. And among the thinking and the experienced, many an echo would resound to my voice; but though happiness cannot depend on riches, it may be greatly increased by a right use of them, and only by a *right use*; for an abuse of anything is folly, and folly is degradation, and degradation is misery. Dante, with profound ethical discernment, assigns the same place and mode of punishment in his *Inferno* to the prodigal and the avaricious; and Virgil in answer to the inquiry of the Poet as to who they were, and what was their crime, replies,

“ That *ill they gave*,  
And *ill they kept*, hath of the beauteous world  
Deprived, and set them at this strife;”

adding,

“ How brief, how vain,  
The goods committed into Fortune's hands,  
For which the human race keep such a coil !  
Not all the gold that is beneath the moon,  
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls  
Might purchase rest for one.”\*

The abuse of wealth leads to avarice on one hand, to prodigality on the other : from the former I consider you secure, therefore, as my purpose is not to write essays on morality in general, but to aid you in counteracting your own individual tendencies to evil, I will proceed to say somewhat of the latter.

It has been truly said that “it is hard, if not impossible, for a prodigal person to be guilty of no vice but prodigality;”† and your own observation will easily assure you of the truth of this assertion, for how can the prodigal exercise the bright virtues of temperance, moderation, and justice? And what think you of the alms which ruin the confiding creditor, to blazon the donor's name at the head of a *charitable* subscription? Habitually to exceed our means is to be habitually unjust to those from whose credulity or greediness

\* Carey's Dante—Hell., cant. vii.

† South, vol. iv., sermon x.

of gain we *borrow* our superfluities; and in what keeping is the honour, the veracity, of those who make no scruple of being habitually unjust? amongst such people all trace of truth is lost; and to such a degree have they perverted the nature of things, that a man who at one moment will send away a *dun* with a deliberate and absolute falsehood will at the next shed the blood of a fellow creature who has presumed to question his veracity! What then is the right use of riches? To do good; and by doing good, I do not only mean clothing the naked and feeding the hungry—these are duties too imperative on persons of your means to be insisted on by me, too obvious to need suggesting to your mind,—but by doing good I mean such an expenditure of your income as shall confer the utmost possible benefit on all those in any way connected with you, thereby assuring to yourself the only happiness wealth *can* assure, even to those who rightly use it.

Order and method are the true basis of just expenditure: therefore, begin by fixing the sum you mean to spend annually on the unsatisfactory items of food and raiment,

including the parade and show *positively* necessary for the proper maintenance of your rank in life, (for I would not have you imitate the royal miser, who, penurious in all else, reserved a vain magnificence for his tomb\*): and in this be guided by the example of the most moderate, the least ostentatious persons in your own social position. Set apart another, and, if possible, an equivalent sum for the encouragement of the arts and sciences, for charitable purposes, and for the succour and furtherance of useful institutions, wherever you may meet with them, and more especially in your own country and neighbourhood,—because local knowledge will render your munificence opportune and judicious, and because we may reasonably suppose that the wise providence which saw fit that there should always be “hewers of wood and drawers of water” has placed the poor of each district under the special care and protection of the rich: and, in England, so much is done for the alleviation of poverty, that little would be left to wish for, if the tradesman in London were not often insolently refused his just due,

\* Henry VII. of England.

which is given to support the Sunday-school, or to desecrate the Lord's table, in the country. Finally, let both these sums together fall short of your income by at least one-fifth of the whole; for the man who exceeds an income of thousands by twenty pounds is poorer than he who has but twenty pounds a year and economizes twenty pence.

Your inexperience in pecuniary affairs disposes you almost equally to two errors; firstly, that of thinking your purse inexhaustible; secondly, that of fancying it insufficient for the munificent projects I suggest to you. As true perfection consists in a nice balance between the passions and reason, so true affluence consists in a just proportioning of our desires to our means, and not simply in the length of our rent-rolls.

In the first place, then, be your social position what it may, the only safe the only honourable principle of expenditure is to adapt your style of living strictly to your means; the only wise, the only rational style of living is to avoid being a slave to superfluities. Enjoy the gifts of fortune, but enjoy them intellectually, not sensually. Your

means allow you to keep a number of domestics and a carriage:—do not, therefore, forget the use of your limbs, or run into the ridiculous excess of having horses too valuable to use, and servants too *fine* to wait on you. Your station in life,—custom,—the encouragement you owe to trade,—require you to wear silks, velvets, cachmeres, and even jewels in moderation;—but accustom yourself to exchange all these for a “russet gown,” when you visit the squalid abodes of misery, where your superfluities would dazzle the “eyes that run down with tears,” and be an indelicate mockery of him that wants for all things: and, as a general rule, remember that simplicity is the best taste at all ages, and the fittest ornament of youth.

Let your table be simple; for no station in life can render epicurean habits necessary, or even excusable. The guests who must be allured by sumptuous fare are far better away.

And, with respect to the sums lavished on what are considered by the world as amusements, calculate at the end of one week the money spent in this way, and the pleasure it has purchased; and if in conscience you can

think it well bestowed, any further remonstrance would be useless.

Moderation in all that regards the body and its wants is most conducive to health and rational enjoyment; your income will increase with the retrenchment of every superfluous and imaginary want; and in place of the baubles of a day, whose possession only pleases by the secret fostering of some insidious feeling of rivalry, some desire of display, I propose to you the cultivation of a taste for the fine arts,—in the pursuit of which you may reward and encourage merit; and the sublime gratification of healing the wounded spirit and binding up the broken heart,—not by self-complacent acts of noisy charity,—not by placing your name at the head of every printed list of donations,—not by dealing out food and clothing in your castle-hall;—though all this should be done with circumspection and modesty, and for the sake of example;—but by a ministry such as was confided of old to angels, and such as was exercised by Him who called to Hagar in *the desert*, saying, “What aileth thee, Hagar? **FEAR NOT.**” The desert into which the Hagers of the present

day are cast out to perish with their sons is the desert of obscurity, neglect, and poverty—not the poverty which exposes its deformities to excite the compassion or extort the assistance of all beholders, but the poverty which assumes the mantle of decency, and withers and droops in secrecy and silence over disappointed hopes, blighted affections, unknown or paralysed talents and energies. To woman's tact and delicate sympathy is assigned the office of drying these bitter tears, and drawing near with words of consolation to the child of misfortune, who,

“ With his disease of all shunn'd poverty  
Walks, like contempt, alone.”

You will think, perhaps, or there will be many around you ready to suggest to you, that in all this there is no view to your own enjoyment of the good things which providence has awarded you,—that all is to be sacrifice and privation for yourself, for the sake of lavishing your property on those who “will not thank you:”—you will hear that “charity begins at home,”—that “the poor are ungrateful and vicious,”—that your money will be

thrown away, and so forth. You are fortunate if you have among your acquaintance a wiser man than he who said, "cast thy bread upon the waters, *thou shalt find it after many days.*" And my opinion on the true use of wealth is founded not only on the Christian principle of being content with food and raiment, but on sound reasoning and experience, which has never yet been found at variance with the maxims of the "son of Jesse."

The most unskilful reasoner must perceive that if we multiply our wants in proportion to the increase of our means we must be for ever indigent. Of what avail is it to have ten thousand pounds a year, if our necessities, real or imaginary, require that we should spend nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine? Does the remaining cipher constitute affluence?

Those who live to the extent of their means are not only poor, let their income be what it may, but the larger its amount the poorer they are. The most artificial wants have been found in all ages the most imperious and enslaving; and the fine lady experiences more mortification in renouncing her carriage or her opera-box than the child of misfortune

does in pawning her necessaries to buy bread ; and this, not because many eyes are on the former while the latter is shrouded by obscurity, but because in the humiliations of ostentation and luxury *all is humiliating*. There is no inward feeling of self-respect to sustain us in the loss of those vanities on which so many of our acquaintance have founded their respect and pretended friendship for us. We feel that the overthrow of the idols to which we have sacrificed prudence, economy, real comfort, the power of doing good, and, but too often, principle and honesty, strips us of our illusions and leaves us in naked deformity. We feel that the friendships we have captivated in reality by our brilliant position, our agreeable entertainments, or by the celebrity which our name confers, will frankly desert us at the first turn of evil fortune ; thus tacitly declaring that not our talent, or virtues, or merits were the attraction, but our rent-roll, our escutcheon, our vogue. Shakespere says that

“ Not a man, for being simply man,  
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours  
That are without him, as places, riches, favour,  
Prizes of accident, as oft as merit :

Which, when they fall, as being slippery standers,  
The love that leaned on them as slippery too  
Do one pluck down another, and together  
Die in the fall."

And in this all is humiliation; such mortifications are generally reserved, sooner or later, for those who live profusely, and sanction the encroachment of ever-growing wants; and it is to avoid them that I would urge you to a rational and measured expenditure, which those who are longing to bask in the reflected sunshine of your profusion will be ever ready to stigmatise as mean and parsimonious.

And not only are prudence and moderation necessary even to the real possession of abundant means, but we must form a rational idea of true enjoyment before those means can make us differ in aught save appearance from our poorer neighbours. In order that wealth may render you happier, is it not essentially necessary that it be expended for yourself, and not for others? "But," you will say, "this is inconsistent with your previously expressed sentiments." Not at all. I have combatted luxury, parade, and ostentation, on the ground that they reduce all to the same level of pecuniary embarrassment, which is equally

destructive to happiness, whether the sum in question be units or millions. I am now ready to assert, and to prove, that our luxury, our parade, and our ostentation, are sacrifices which we make to others and from which we derive a most uncertain and never unalloyed gratification. In the first place, the very phraseology of persons under the influence of this *duperie* is conclusive:—"For the sake of appearance"—"to support our rank in the eyes of the world"—"to keep up a proper style"—"for the credit of the house"—"to avoid drawing down remark," &c., &c., &c. These are all manifest acknowledgments of a worse than Egyptian bondage—a dependance on the opinion of those whom half the time they despise and always dislike; for these awful judges are also their rivals. These task-masters who command them to make bricks, but give them no straw,\* are in their turn the slaves of opinion and display.

The husband buys new carriages or new horses, not because the old were inadequate, or the new more suitable, but to "keep up appearances"—to prove to people who would

\* Exodus v. 16.

not give him a crust to-morrow if he wanted it, that he is animated by the magnanimous intention of spending at least as much as his richer neighbours. The wife buys new furniture "for the credit of her establishment," and changes the setting of the family jewels, "to avoid drawing down remark:" so much for the world; and in return the world generally says, "I suspect Mr. B— is living beyond his means."

What do they reserve for themselves? Privations of various kinds—humiliations of all kinds—from the humiliation of dreading a dun in each knock at the door, to the humiliation, less acknowledged but more real, of sending away empty the relative, the fatherless, and the widow. It is astonishing that this infatuation should have attained such a height as it has, particularly among the middle classes of England, who are yet a sober, thinking race. A certain style of living is considered indispensable to certain professions, and custom has unfortunately rendered it too often really so. The poverty that exists among naval and military officers, and the members of the learned professions, is almost wholly owing

to this mania for display. Their incomes would be ample for the retired tradesman or citizen whose manners are more simple, and who spends his hardly-earned savings on himself and his family; but they are wholly inadequate for the *gentleman* whose reputation (and too often his success in his career) depends on giving a certain number of dinners, and keeping a gig or a horse, and a clumsy footman; to retrieve the expense of which, he lives on privation for eleven months of the year.

Is not this lavishing on others what was given for ourselves? And when the sacrifice is made, is it always accepted? Does not the surpassing splendour of a successful rival turn all our joy to bitterness? our exultation, like fairy gold, to “chuckie stanes?” Is it not in the power of every breath to destroy our fragile fabric?

Compare, on the other hand, the solid enjoyments I propose to you in works of beneficence—in the cultivation of the mind—in the encouragement of arts and sciences—in rational recreation and active well-doing; and can you doubt in which scale true happiness is to be found?

The Turks say, in bidding their friends farewell, "May your shadow never be less!" If virtue and wisdom could cast a shadow, I would adopt their mode of salutation.



## LETTER V.

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ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

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THE past is irretrievably gone ; the future may never exist for us ; and we pass the present in regretting the one and anticipating the other. The soul is conscious that her imprisonment in the body is but a state of passage, and that she has but time wherein to prepare for eternity. Much of it is absorbed by corporeal necessities ; a still greater portion is passed in a state which might remind the most unthinking of death ; and yet the little that remains is so embarrassing, so tedious, that the fertility of man's genius has never been more displayed than in inventions for "*passing the time.*" In all ages, in all climes, among all people, the same insane predilection for annihilating time has been manifested. In the earliest infancy of far India, chess was invented

by the grave and meditative Hindoo ; wrestling and running-matches are mentioned in the earliest traditions of elegant and refined Greece ; cards were introduced in France, in the middle ages, where they found men already provided with the more manly pastimes of hunting, hawking, jousting, fencing, and the constant diversion afforded by the knavery or folly of fools and jesters. Cook, in his voyages, met with inveterate gambling among the wildest savages ; “ many of whom,” he says, “ delighted in a game resembling draughts ;” \* and among the civilised English of the present day who exclaim at the ferocious inhumanity of gladiatorial combats, at the barbarity of bull-baiting, and even at the puerile cruelty of cock-fighting, individuals are still to be found who patronise pugilism ! And though, among these, the athletic sports had no doubt a view to utility in their origin, the benefit must always have been confined to the actor, while the spectator could have no higher motive than that of passing the time.

Horse-racing, in itself a legitimate means of encouraging ameliorations in the breed of

\* Cook. Third Voyage. B. v. ch. 7.

that noble animal, has become a fertile nursery-ground for every species of vice and wickedness, from the immense concourse of persons totally uninterested in the real object of the meeting, and intent only on gambling, thieving, or *passing the time*.

Theatrical representations, which, properly understood, rectify the taste, forward the progress of the arts, and may be even made instrumental to morality, are tolerated in the most perverted, insipid, and immoral forms, as a means of *passing the time*; and everything is distorted by the giddy and unthinking, to the same preposterous end. Concerts are attended by those who do not know Mozart's Requiem from the sailor's hornpipe;—picture galleries are encumbered by the virtually blind, who see no difference between a Titian and a Rembrandt;—charity bazaars are thronged by those who have not a shilling to lay out, and think charity an encouragement to idleness;—theatres are filled by those who would not know a tragedy from a comedy, unless it were announced on the handbills, and are neither moved to sadness by the one, nor to mirth by the other;—horticultural meetings

are crowded by those who do not know a ranunculus from a camelia, a banana from a pine-apple;—missionary meetings by those who cannot say the Lord's Prayer, and who, mistaking civilised heathens for Christians at home, may be excused for thinking that the heathen savages abroad may be saved just as well without Christ, and the preaching of the glad tidings of free salvation and imputed righteousness by those who trust in their own good works and believe in their own righteousness;—and one and all with the same purpose—to *pass the time*! “From Pharaoh on his throne to the captive in the dungeon,” none are exempt from this strange enmity to time, and those, least of all, who profess not to believe in eternity. Yet one would think that the cares of existence provided occupations at once too constant and too interesting to leave them so much weary leisure. “Charged from his earliest years with the keeping of his honour, his property, his health; and later, of the honour, property, and health of his family and dependants, man is overwhelmed with studies, exercises, and necessities, real or fictitious; from dawn till

night he is pursued by thoughts and affairs, the neglect of which is to cause his inevitable misery ;”\* and to these responsibilities he will attribute all his wretchedness, and, self-decluded, look forward to repose. But annul all these hopes and fears, these struggles, this agitation, this breathless, restless, weary chase, and man will be supremely miserable. And why so? Because in all this seeming activity, this apparent pursuit, man in reality is not *pursuing*, but PURSUED; the enemy he flies from is self and the vague but inherent longing for a repose which belonged to Eden and to innocence. The soul, finding nothing in herself either flattering or consoling, has made her chief joy consist in self-oblivion, and her chief care is bestowed in seeking that which most induces this fatal state. All that is called amusement and pastime is but an effort to fly from the contemplation of self; for, after a day passed in the bustle and fatigue of affairs, we hasten to consume the few moments that remain in some way, however trivial or may be unworthy, which diverts us from ourselves. We pursue not the things themselves,

\* Pascal.

but the pursuit of those things. Examine the matter yourself. What is the scope of any profession, trade, or occupation? Would the young ensign sit down *happy in inactivity* if he could in a moment pass through all the grades of his profession, and see himself a general at twenty? If, by enchantment, the midshipman could see himself an admiral, the deacon an archbishop, the advocate lord-chancellor, the medical student a physician; or even could the day labourer see himself in possession of the land he tills—would they either of them lose the desire of activity? When the banker, the merchant, or the manufacturer possesses a fortune of millions, does he cease from speculation, from traffic, from invention, unless age or infirmity render activity impossible, or still more painful than repose? Is the author, the poet, the painter, the sculptor, the tragedian, the composer, the dancer, the mountebank, the charlatan ever satiate with renown? No, for “*he that loveth silver SHALL NOT be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.*” “All are like the man who, happy in playing every day for a certain trifle, would be wretched if he were forced to accept triple

the sum on condition that he should not play." It is the pursuit both of business and amusement which pleases us; and this is because it leads us out of ourselves, while the possession would leave us to the contemplation of our own souls. Why is this so hateful to us? Why do we not love to *think* of ourselves as much as we love to *talk* of ourselves? It is the innate idea of the happiness we have lost, which makes us so restlessly pursue every trifle which, turning our attention from within, veils but never can fill up the aching void that sin has substituted for the peace which passeth all understanding. Man, unable to conquer death and sin, endeavours to forget himself and them; and the diversions in which he places his chief happiness on earth are, in fact, his greatest misery, for they act on the soul like opium on the body; they lull and stupify the pain, but leave full liberty to the march of the disease: and man seeks vainly in outward things that happiness which is not in him, nor in them, but in Christ Jesus; for it is one of the unceasing miracles of Christianity to reconcile man to himself in reconciling him to God. The man who loves none

but himself is he who, of all others, most hates to be alone with his own soul; he seeks all *for himself*, and flies from nothing more than *from himself*. Hence it is that so many people of superior minds are so inordinately fond of hunting, shooting, fishing, gambling, dancing, and many other pursuits in which the mind has little or no part. It is not that there is any real happiness in aught that can be acquired by these occupations; for the hare, the pheasant, the trout, the stake, the wager would be comparatively worthless if they were offered unsought. It is the fatigue, the emotion, the bustle, which prevents our thinking of ourselves, that is the attraction. Hence it is that the tumult of the world is delightful, imprisonment an awful punishment, and solitude insupportable.

Two great instincts have survived the ruin of man's original purity—the instinct of a happiness beyond ourselves, and the instinct that that happiness is repose. The conflict of these two real principles, with all that is false and rebel in our nature, plunges us into the vortex of agitation, whose pretended scope is a repose which were our death warrant attained by such

means. Pyrrhus could not be happy either before or after the conquest of the world he coveted; and perhaps the life of effeminate enjoyment proposed to him as already in his power, was less calculated to afford contentment than the disquietude of the career he meditated. These two instincts combined are the source of that restless activity which, the mainspring of a corrupt society, *could* have had neither scope nor even existence in a state of innocence. The happiness which man would then have enjoyed would have rendered a desire of change both senseless and impossible, and earth spreading her spontaneous abundance before him, obviated the necessity of exertion.

It were as useless now to inquire into, as presumptuous to imitate, that state of beatific repose, proper only to the soul untainted by sin, whose alpha and omega is communion with her God; but it is profitable to trace our vaunted energy to its source, that we may know the idleness even of our greatest merits and guard against the misdirection of our strength.

Sin, then, is the source of that restless

*centrifugal force* which propels the vast social machine; when man sinned, God cursed not him, but the ground for his sake, and condemned him to "eat bread in the sweat of his brow,"—but man lost not with his innocence, the love of truth, the desire of perfection, nor the remembrance of his happiness; and to one of these three great principles, may every effort of the human mind be traced. What is the ambition of fame, riches, glory, but the desire of perfection in kind or degree? What are the abstract researches of science, the thirst of knowledge, but the love of truth? What are the yearnings of a mother's heart over the cradle of her infant—the tears of the orphan over the bier of a parent—or the mysterious and absorbing feeling which merges our very being in those we love,—but the longings after a happiness that none of these can afford?

Corruption is the origin of that restlessness which, misdirected or not directed at all, leads to the misemployment of time, to *ennui*, to vice, and to misery.

How, then, should time be employed? Though I purposed not yet to advocate directly

the cause of religion, I cannot omit saying in this place, that all time is lost which is not employed in the service of God; but remember that to him that believeth "*all things are of faith.*" Far from admiring those who, for the love of God, withdraw from their place in society, and shut up their savage virtue in convents, or bury themselves in deserts, I say with scripture, "Let every man abide in the calling whereunto he is called," and thereby glorify God; his business, his studies, his labors, his duties, his affections, his temptations, are all, through faith, sanctified to the same end.

For those who have not faith, the time is best employed in pursuits which, elevating the mind, purifying the affections, and regulating the passions, may make them brighter ornaments of God's church when their hour for believing comes, and worthier members of society, in the mean time, *emulating* the happiness of the Christian, which none can *equal*.

It is commonly said that "the mind requires relaxation,"—that "constant application is impossible," and so forth. All these, contrary to many axioms, are true in the spirit but false in the letter. The human mind,

essentially incapable of absolute repose, even when the body (and perhaps reason) sleeps, takes rest in alternation of fatigue; and it is necessary to relieve the reasoning powers and the memory, called into active exercise by business or deep study, by the exertion of simple perception and observation, which alone are required in the ordinary recreation of society, and in the contemplation of works of art, the performance of music, and all other spectacles appealing rather to the imagination than the reason.

The mind is fortified like the body by rude exercises and simple diet, and will fall into utter impotence if the exception be substituted for the rule—if amusements and diversions are made the business of life, and application and reflection the dreaded and reluctantly performed penance. Innocent pastimes, immoderately sought, will lose all relish to the palled palate; and the zest of excitement, danger, or vice must be added to render them acceptable. Thus in cards, chess, billiards, tennis, cricket, and most other games and sports, the first object having been lost sight of, and men no longer resorting to them as lawful relaxations

from business or study, or even as wholesome corporeal exercises, but as a constant occupation, the lure of gain has been superadded, to lend a false and pernicious attraction to that which perversion and abuse have robbed of its original charm; and I speak of the whole species, for women are as much under the influence of this depraved appetite for incessant amusement as men, and more blameable in their indulgence of it, because their minds, called to less severe exertion, have less absolute need of constant relaxation. All the so called amusements of the world are allowable as recreations (save to the Christian, who must *separate from the world*, in its wise follies, as well as its foolish vices), but inadmissible as *occupations* for rational beings. Their constant pursuit, like a diet composed wholly of sweetmeats, not only palls to the taste, disorders the system, and undermines the health, but it insensibly perverts the morals by relaxing the reins of self-denial, and infallibly defeats its own end; and those who live only for amusement are the never-failing victims of *ennui*. Why is it that persons residing habitually in retirement are so remarkable for their ingenuous enjoyment of

the commonest diversions of the capital, as to become objects of ridicule to the empty-headed triflers, who have made the supreme of good breeding to consist in seeking perpetually pleasures which they would be ashamed to be pleased with when found? Is it not because their habits and position lessen the number of their opportunities of dissipation, and necessity making them moderate in spite of themselves, protracts the enjoyments which excess cuts short at the very outset? Among women this frenzy of amusement has, in addition, the disastrous effect of abbreviating her "three score years and ten" to the brief span described by the duration of her beauty; for "in the world" only one age is tolerated, and that is, if I may so speak, the maturity of youth: too young or too old, they are alike neglected and overlooked; and those who by aid of art contrive to preserve their beauty beyond the magic lustrum are almost as much despised as those who presume to lose it too soon. Think, then, before you hurry into this beauty-mart, how short your reign must be! and once over, how mortifying to retire—how humiliating to remain! and reckon not on reserving to your later years

the intellectual pursuits which I propose that you should now exchange, but occasionally, for the gaieties of the world. The branch while it is green may be turned this way or that, and will take the bent we choose to give it, but when the tree is full grown the endeavour to train it is useless; it will then break, but not bend. So the mind which forms with ease and retains with pertinacity the habits of youth becomes inept and rigid in after years, and when time lays bare the thorn of all these gaudy roses, we have no resource but the retrospection of the deluded past, whose unheeded future is our present bitterness.

Recreation, then, is salutary when rightly used—fatal, when abused; the mind devoted to pleasure cannot but abuse it: the mind devoted to serious matters will feel no need of its feverish excitement, and will comprehend that the right use of relaxation is to economize time, and send back the mind with renewed vigour to its worthier pursuits; when it fails in this effect, it is improper in kind, or excessive in degree. You have been accustomed to see time cruelly wasted; therefore, some few practical remarks on its distribution will not be misplaced here.

Moderation in the pursuit of pleasure will prevent the fashionable necessity of turning night into day, and enable you to rise early, which I strongly recommend your doing; an antiquated piece of advice, perhaps, but one which cannot be too often repeated. The business of your toilette presents a claim which should never be neglected; for it is as wise and commendable to cultivate and preserve the charms nature has given us, as it is ridiculous and reprehensible to acquire new ones by art and deception, or to deck out those we have, with a view to coquetry and display.

Whatever your fortune may be, your domestic affairs must always have a due share of attention, and a little method will reduce them to so small a compass as to take very little from pleasanter occupations.

The morning is the best time for reading, and, with flowers, an aviary, and needle-work, you may always be agreeably and becomingly employed; but, in all things, seek *an object*,—do not waste your time and eyesight on endless embroideries, which would be better done by some poor girl who needs the money you would give her for their execution. Many

young women, too, waste "an infinity of time" in writing what an acquaintance of mine calls "*darned letters*," of a preposterous length, on the most futile and uninteresting subjects, flattering themselves that they are not idle, because their hands, and perhaps their heads, are employed. We all of us have acquaintances and relatives, with whom, though absent, it is expedient and proper that we should exchange friendly salutations; nor can any thing be more delightful, or more profitable, than the sort of communion which letter-writing establishes between distant friends: but remember that there is even more *busy idleness* than *idle idleness* in the world; and whatever your occupation may be, it is its motive, its object, which characterizes it as useful or useless.

There are generally many evening hours around the fire-side when conversation may be happily mingled with works and games of various kinds; but there is a rage in the present day for tapestry and purse-making, netting and embroidering, which is pursued for the sake of fashion, and often to the detriment of more useful occupations, and, as

such, it becomes reprehensible abuse. Nor can I approve of women in easy circumstances making their own clothes, and usurping a dozen little offices from their maid, which are generally ill-performed, and always encroach on the time that might be better devoted to ameliorating the condition of the poor in their neighbourhood, to the education of their children, or to an attentive study of their husband's comfort. A friend of mine, who has received an excellent education, and is in all respects an admirable wife and mother, is unhappily possessed by this demon of busy idleness. She pays two hundred a-year for the superficial education which her daughters receive at a provincial boarding-school, and thinks herself a pattern of activity because she makes annually some hundred pots of pickles and preserves, knits an incredible quantity of stockings, and superintends her own farm-yard. Less bodily, and more mental, activity would lead her to act more judiciously..

Punctuality ranks high among the minor virtues, though the habit, once acquired, is one which requires no sacrifice. Among the follies of fashion, habitual impunctuality is one of

the most excusable; for as such persons are usually entirely ignorant of the use of time themselves, it is not astonishing that they should be insensible of its value for others. You have too much common sense to imitate this, or any other of the elegant absurdities which frivolity proposes, and levity accepts as customs. And, as occupations without a scope are but another name for idleness, so there are states of physical inaction more laudable, in their season, than the most bustling activity. The hours spent in the obscurity of a sick chamber, in silent sympathy with those that weep, in watchful attendance on age and infirmity,—Are these hours *idle*, because the arms are folded? The hours passed in solitude, when the mind is occupied in self-retrospection,—in meditation,—in admiration of the wondrous witnesses of His power and glory which the Creator has established in every leaf and flower, in every mountain and every valley, —Are these hours idle? The worldly-minded who never appear to understand the virtue of moderation, save where it may diminish our zeal for the service of God, are ever ready to stigmatize as *idle* the hours passed in contem-

plation, solitude, or prayer. *Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard his word*, while Martha was cumbered about much serving ; and Jesus said, "but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her."

Jacob was *alone* when the angel wrestled with him, and blessed him : Moses was in the *desert* when he received his mission to deliver Israel from the house of bondage : John was an *exile* in Patmos when he received the Revelations : but Christ, "being made a curse for us," was surrounded by angels at his birth,—by multitudes in the triumph of his miracles,—by his disciples in the glory of his transfiguration ; but he was *alone* in all his sufferings : alone in the desert,—alone at Gethsemane,—alone before Pilate,—alone in the grave ; he trod the wine-press of God's wrath alone ; "for, of the people there was none with him." Meditating on these things, solitude becomes populous, and inaction becomes activity to the soul of the Christian.

## LETTER VI.

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ON THE CHOICE OF ACQUAINTANCE.

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You are almost too young to know the full value of real friendship, which may rightly be estimated among heaven's choicest blessings ; but, though our own seeking has little to do with its acquisition, the *choice of acquaintance* has so much influence on the formation of friends, that you cannot attach too great importance to this misconstrued portion of our conduct.

The errors on this subject begin with the misapplication of the word "*friend*;" and you must learn to distinguish the gossip of the "auld wife," the acquaintance of the worldly, the boon companion of the intemperate, and the accomplice of the guilty, from the friend of the virtuous ; for rest assured that good men alone have *friends*. To what purpose should

the selfish, the deceitful, the unprincipled, make friends, save to unite in forwarding their mutual schemes, by right means or wrong? The soul delighting in falsehood can neither feel nor inspire confidence; the sensualist is profoundly ignorant of the charms of intellectual intercourse: the egotist is incapable of attachment: such persons may have companions, associates, accomplices,—incapable of friendship, they never can have friends.

Plutarch says that three things are necessary to friendship:—"virtue, as being commendable; society, as being delightful; profit, which is indispensable;" and Cowper, with his usual discernment and sound sense, remarks that

The man who hails you Tom or Jack,  
And proves by thumping on your back  
His sense of your great merit,  
Is such a friend that one had need  
Be very much his friend indeed  
To pardon or to bear it.

But such is the delusion of the world on this point that you will constantly hear the name of friendship applied to a week's acquaintance, begun in levity and cemented by

drinking, gambling, dancing, smoking, or any other species of folly or dissipation which can have given scope neither for an exchange of sentiments, or a trial of fidelity; yet,

“ By some chance,  
Some trick not worth an egg, they grow dear friends,  
And interjoin their issues ;”

while all will admit that those only are true friends who are ready even to make sacrifices to serve us, and who will stand by us in weal or woe.

School friendships are, in too many cases, the only sincere ones man ever knows: in after life, those who eat his dinners, shoot his game, and ride his horses, if he is rich,—or whose dinners he eats, whose game he shoots, whose horses he rides, if he is poor,—are his only friends. Great inequality of circumstances is as unfavourable to the development of this sentiment as it is the best test of its real existence; and bear in mind in admitting a stranger to your intimacy, that he has no choice, but *must* become either your enemy or your friend. The visiting list is the stepping-stone to intimacy; yet the antiquity

of a peerage, the length of a rent-roll, the weight of county interest, are the most usual, the most undisputed, titles of admission to it: and those who place their happiness in the sounding names it contains, in the number of elegant nonentities who throng their reception rooms, or in the reputation of fashion which such conduct obtains, do well—nay, they cannot do otherwise; and if your fortune is assured against reverses, your happiness against vicissitudes, your body against suffering, and your mind against affliction,—if the world, with its baubles and puppet-shows, is your only aim,—you also will do well to take the gewgaws which are best gilt, the butterflies whose wings are gaudiest. If you place your happiness in aristocratic elegance, in fashionable renown, you need not look beyond the reputation and pedigree of your acquaintance; but I should wish you to remember that friendship was ordained to supply the profit, the enjoyment, and the consolation, which the ties of nature do not always afford; and, if you would know the real charm of society, you must go a step farther, and examine the minds, the conduct, and the senti-

ments of those with whom you habitually mix, for, to their shame be it spoken, those are not always the most estimable, the most refined, the most honorable, the most intellectual, who, farthest removed from temptation, and surrounded from their cradles by every advantage, should shine “as lights before the world, as cities set on a hill.”

Nature has a peerage of her own—an aristocracy of talent, often though not necessarily hereditary; and without violating social decencies, or inverting social order, we should do well to render at least as much homage to the talents which God has given, as to the titles which man confers;—to genius, that patent of a nobility which man would in vain bestow, reserved as it is to Nature’s favoured children.

To wealth, titles, and position, *as such*, an outward etiquette of forms is due which none have any right whatever to refuse; to virtue and to talent an inward tribute of respect is due which none but superior minds can feel. The wise will not suffer the former to pass from the manner into the heart; the discreet will make the latter pass from the heart into the manner.

Among the many who pass in array before you, seek then to retain as acquaintances chiefly those whom you have reason to suppose would be desirable as friends; those whose conduct bespeaks them above the empty follies of the worldly; those who neither flatter nor envy you; those who would rather join you in good works than rival you in dissipation; those, above all, who never yet smiled encouragement on an act or word of levity into which you may have been betrayed in their presence.

This circumspection would be impossible were you about to launch on a career of worldliness (though even then you might use it in the choice of your intimates); but you are, I trust, more disposed to enjoy the society of your acquaintance than to receive them through mere form and for the sake of filling your rooms as nearly as possible to the point of suffocation. In private society, as in many other things, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." A few trifling silly people will damp the spirit of rational conversation; a few brawling politicians will introduce discord in the place of cheerfulness; a few young ladies afflicted with the St. Vitus' dance of display

will silence the inspirations of talent. Such people not only mar the society into which they are habitually admitted, but they frequently exclude the benevolent and the intelligent, among whom you may hope to meet the one or two whom Providence has reserved to afford you the solace of friendship. Avoid also, as a general rule to which there must be exceptions, those whose families are in a state of open dissension, to which, as strangers, we can bring no remedy, while we are often involved in its sad consequences. Shun the miser and the prodigal, the atheist, the libertine, and the satirist, with equal care. Their society can only be pernicious; and you must learn to look on your intercourse with the world as a part of that great whole which ought to work together for your own good and the glory of God.

And even in your circle thus weeded of the outwardly vicious beware of forming sudden intimacies whose rupture would cause as much scandal as if the connexion had been of longer date, for the persons of least merit are generally those who make most pretensions to friendship, and who are most indignant when abandoned.

The intimacy of married women of your own age requires more examination than any other. Women have so many sources of rivalry among themselves, so many petty jealousies, so many jarring interests, that an intimacy dissolved is the sure signal for breach of confidence, calumny, and hatred.

Lord Byron says that friendships between persons of different sexes are the most lasting, provided all idea of love be excluded ; but this can rarely be the case where either party is young. I would not say that it is impossible; but beware of being the dupe of *platonic affection*, as it is commonly understood. Love being but a modification of friendship, the transition from one to the other is almost imperceptible, and the danger great in proportion. In any case, be sure that the man who seeks your friendship to the exclusion or depreciation of your husband's is a wolf in sheep's clothing—a lover in embryo, if not, in disguise,—and but too often incapable of the sentiment he professes.

Flattery, which so often beguiles the unwary, is not only no proof of affection, but it is an insult which the generous minded will

never offer to real merit: and by flattery I do not mean the just appreciation and commendation of our virtues, but an affected or excessive admiration of qualities which we either do not possess at all, or not in the degree supposed; and "if its operation be nearly examined it will be found to owe its acceptance not to our ignorance but knowledge of our failures, and to delight us, rather as it consoles our wants than displays our possessions."\* The self-sufficiency engendered by flattery is an obstacle to all progress, for there is more hope of a fool than of a man who is wise in his own conceit; and is he a true friend who will join the erroneous tendencies of our nature, and lavish on us that adulation which the treachery of our own hearts renders fatal? Flattery degrades both the giver and receiver; and if we rightly appreciated it, we should esteem such unmerited praise as the most serious of the many offences committed against us with impunity—for whether we are duped by it or not, it is seldom wholly innoxious.

We often persuade ourselves we dislike flattery, when in fact we are only discontented

\* Rambler, 155.

with the manner of flattering ; and the women who in early youth have swallowed with avidity all the awkward compliments lavished on their beauty imagine that they are grown wiser with increasing years because such clumsy adulation no longer pleases but even disgusts them ; they forget to observe that the delicate homage of the masters of the art is as delightful to them as ever ; their weakness is the same, but their taste is more fastidious. This same flattery then, which is the origin and bond of so many connexions that the world is pleased to decorate with the name of friendship, is not only pernicious to it, but it is incompatible with its true existence—because flattery ordinarily implies falsehood, and falsehood knows not friendship ; and though, from a similarity of taste and opinions, we may be frequently disposed unreservedly to approve the conduct of those we love, the approbation will be sincere, expressed with the simplicity which ever distinguishes truth, with the delicacy which teaches us to avoid wounding the modesty inseparable from true merit, and with somewhat of the reserve we feel inclined to exercise towards ourselves,—for friends intimately sym-

pathizing in the same ideas and feelings are conscious of a liability to the same errors.

Thus my prohibition of flattery does not exclude the expressions of esteem and affection so delightful both to give and receive, because esteem and affection are not the growth of an hour, and we may legitimately extol the good qualities of which we have a long and positive knowledge.

Bacon, in his essay on friendship, says "there is no such flatterer as a man's selfe; and there is no such remedie against the flatterie of a man's selfe as the libertie of a friend." Sincerity and boldness of reproof are therefore among the tokens of friendship. Alexander the Great reproached an ancient counsellor that he had never reproved him. "If," said he, "you do not perceive my faults, your ignorance renders you unworthy of the post you occupy; if you perceive them, your silence is treason."

There is no more merit in being blind to the defects of others than to our own; and we should endeavour to form a really just estimate of the persons near and dear to us, and judge them with impartiality, for in this way alone can we ever serve them truly, or exercise self-

denial or christian charity in bearing with their faults.

Having formed a dispassionate opinion of those with whom you live in intimacy, learn to give and take rebukes with humility and gentleness; defend yourself with firmness when you are conscious of right; but avow your error when you are convinced of it. He who confesses a fault with frank readiness, far from being humiliated by avowing himself in the wrong, is momentarily superior to the person who reproves him, for the very reason that it is easier to see the mote in our brother's eye than the beam in our own.

Many of the duties which friendship imposes are rendered, by the very nature of the sentiment, of easy accomplishment.

The philosophers who would reduce all virtues to an identical principle of selfishness, variously manifested, have gone so far as to say that friendship, with all its devotion, is but "a commerce by which self-love always hopes to gain." Be it even so,—let them quibble upon words as they will; the self-renunciation which leads a man to lay down his life, his fortune, or his happiness, for another, call it

egotism or generosity, it is still a noble, an elevating, an admirable sentiment, and one which is rarely to be met with among the dissolute and the depraved. If egotism be indeed the root of every virtue, it is somewhat singular that its fairest fruits are never to be met with, save among those who deny it as a principle of action.

Those who aspire to friendship, but shrink from sacrifices, would possess the rose without the thorn; let such timid spirits renounce at once the office which imposes on them double sorrows with double joys; if we make profession of the sentiment, we should be ready to prove it by doing for others, at least as much as we would do for ourselves. The moral merit of good works is increased by the sacrifices they cost us; but it is the sublime prerogative of friendship to annul their bitterness, and render pleasurable all efforts for the advantage of the person beloved.

If it is ever your lot to make important sacrifices in the cause of friendship, you will understand this mighty influence of the affections which, though it cannot alter the essential nature of things, or make pain and privation

agreeable, yet enables us to receive with joy whatever may conduce to that happiness which we have learnt to prefer before our own; and none is equal to the sacrifice of our ourselves in the eyes of the person we love—an effort of heroism which may sometimes be induced by peculiar and, I will hope, uncommon circumstances. An instance of it, however, once came under my own notice, and I cite it, though the sentiment which gave rise to it was love—because, as I have before said, friendship is one of the component parts of love.

A woman of high birth, but fallen fortunes, had given her affections, secretly and unsolicited, to the heir of a noble and haughty family; the long unconscious object of her attachment became at length aware of a love which, from her talents, beauty, and the existing sympathy between them, could not fail of being requited; but he, at the same time, became the dupe of a calumny, invented by his family to extinguish the rising passion which their ambition forbade them to sanction. The victim of this stratagem, aware of the insuperable obstacles to her happiness, had the sublime courage to accept the stigma which blighted her memory for ever in

the heart of him she loved and in the world,  
and went down into an early grave, triumphant  
in her solitary martyrdom.

Is there not something superhuman in such  
generosity?



## LETTER VII.

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ON CONVERSATION.

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LANGUAGE is one of the chief superiorities accorded to man above the rest of animated nature, and is, if I may be allowed so fanciful an expression, *the vibration of reason on the air*. The brutes can express all the desires they share with us, in some mute manner; having neither reason nor ideas, they have no language: but man, endowed with superior intelligence, needed this vent for its conceptions, this means of its perfection; and what would *fallen* man have been without this solace to his woes! Imagine, for a moment, the intolerable sadness of a speechless world! Yet there is nothing impossible in the supposition that God might have created all things as we actually see them, save only the gift of speech; conventional signs would have been established for

the conveyance of ideas, which might have existed in almost equal number and variety of combination without any articulate means of expressing them; the march of civilisation would have been incalculably retarded, and the light of reason much less generally diffused, much less beneficial: but no moral or physical law rendered speech a necessity in the existence of man; and, however hypothetical such a speculation may seem, who will blame the fancies which lead us back to admire the goodness of God, to appreciate the mercy which induced the Most High "to confound the language" of the builders of Babel, rather than deprive them and their posterity for ever of its charms and advantages?

Habit renders us too often insensible to the blessings we enjoy, and we are more prone to bewail the weakness of human nature than to exult in its perfections, forgetting that the latter are the free gift of One who owed us nothing, while the former are the inheritance our first father bequeathed to all his race. We hear much of the imperfections of language—of the obscurities different dialects have cast over history and science—of the trouble of

acquiring foreign tongues—of the difficulty of becoming thoroughly masters of our own ; we hear of the mischiefs of lying, slandering, and swearing, of the insufficiency of words to our ideas,—but who speaks of the blessing we enjoy in possessing the power of speech at all ? who dwells on the advantages of communicating our ideas, however imperfectly ? who thinks of being grateful to God that he was not born dumb ?

My plan in all matters of instruction is to go to the fountain head,—to root up bad principles rather than lop off bad practices,—to tell you rather why you should act than what you should do ; if you are convinced by my many arguments, your reason will lend ample weight to my few precepts.

That the abuse of any thing cannot but lead to evil is a point on which we are already agreed. Let us examine, in a cursory manner, the real use of language, its original intention, its actual benefits and evils, and then point out some of its most common abuses,—for in every flock the black sheep is easily discernible—it is the ninety-nine white ones that escape individual observation.

The fact that, save those endowed with reason, no creature possesses the gift of speech, should be, to all minds, sufficient witness that there exists between those two faculties an indisputable tie, and all should be reluctant to sunder what God has joined ; yet the subtlety of metaphysicians was necessary to inform man in sententious phrase that “ the first aim of language was to communicate our thoughts.” And having received this truism as a mighty discovery, few go the one step farther which would lead them to admire the munificence which has made language susceptible of beauties and charms requisite neither to our subsistence nor our instruction, but lavished like flowers on the paths of learning, and destined to procure those intellectual gratifications which are sanctified by gratitude to the giver. Do we not owe to Him, “ whose beneficence no charge exhausts,” the most perfect moral code expressed in the sublimest language—the most important prophecies in the most magnificent poetry—the history of incarnate Godhead in the simplest and most touching prose ?

I pity the wretch whose infidelity not only deprives him of the hope of a future, which the

baseness of his own soul leads him to disbelieve, but inspires him with aversion for even the literary beauties of those writings, which the consent of ages has called by pre-eminence *The Bible*, or *THE Book*.

It is the aptness of any thing for a given use which teaches man the end to which it was created: the original destination of the wings of birds and the fins of fishes was proved by their adaptation to the acts of flying and swimming long before anatomical research laid bare the admirable chain of cause and effect in their construction; for we reason oftener from effect to cause than from cause to effect in the ordinary transactions of life. What better proof then that language was given us originally that we might make the earth resound with the praises of our Creator, than the fact that it has attained no such perfection as in the works of which his glory is the theme? In what profane historian will you find the purity of style, the variety of matter, the simplicity of manner, which marks the writings of Moses? what poet is as exquisitely pathetic as Job? as sublime as Isaiah? as mournfully touching as Jeremiah? what verbosity of style can equal

the poetry contained in the simple exclamation of Ruth to Naomi, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."\*

And what comparison is there, even among profane writers, between those who preceded and those who followed the dawn of Christianity?† Seek in Homer, Virgil, and Herodotus the sublime thoughts, the elevation of sentiment to be found in Milton, Dante, Bossuet. No: Christianity—the praise of God—was wanting to their theme, as imperfect without it as their music possessing but four chords of the seven; THE THREE were wanting to their numbers as to their lyre, and enthusiasm (which signifies in Greek an *inspiration from the divinity*) could only give wings to eloquence when faith had discovered its true object in the adoration of Emanuel, or *God with us*.

Let us indulge in one more flight of fancy. Had man never fallen, to what purpose save the praise of God could language have served? and this theme having raised the accents of man, even in his fallen state, to the highest

\* This passage, like many others of the Bible, acquires new beauties from the brevity of the Latin. *Populus tuus, populus meus; Deus tuus, Deus meus*.

† Chateaubriand.

pitch of sublimity known in the whole range of language, what perfection would it not in happier circumstances have attained? All we know of the songs of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect was revealed to Saint John in the Apocalypse, and the one unvarying strain is "glory to God and to the Lamb?"

But with sin came other necessities and other subjects for man's speech. One idea—the undivided love of God—would have filled an innocent world; a multiplicity of ideas, and of the sublimest nature, result from the Atonement, which but for sin had had no object. What comparison is there between the idea of man created virtuous, and remaining so, to glorify God by his praise and thanksgiving, and the idea of man redeemed from the grave by the blood of Him against whom he had sinned, and raised to immortality and glory by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of God's own Son?

The sciences, which had been useless had not man been condemned to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, afford another fertile harvest of ideas: the arts whose very existence depends on harmony and beauty in their contrast with

discord and deformity—consequences of a fallen state—are a third source of ideas, and consequently of language. But though even sin and error are thus overruled by God to his own glory both in time and eternity, what becomes of all these glorious faculties when truth is lost sight of as their object? Religion is the most exalting theme for human eloquence: but when did the worship of Venus or Apis inspire true eloquence? The sciences are perfected by the communication of ideas, and, at the same time, react on language and perfect it in their turn; but what benefit of this kind did astrology ever confer? The arts themselves tend to elevate the mind to the contemplation of abstract beauty, only while they imitate the truth and harmony of the creation.

Enthusiasm, the very mother of eloquence, is inseparably connected with truth: our enthusiasm may be misdirected, but it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sincere, and without it there is no eloquence. Many have warmly espoused the cause of error, but if they were eloquent in its defence, that error was a truth for them; their reasoning was fallacious, their principles were false, their deductions falser—

but their enthusiasm was real; and whatever was eloquent in their language was derived from truth. The decline of oratorical eloquence in France during the anarchy of the first revolution has been ably commented on by one of our favourite authors,\* and rightly attributed to the deluge of falsehood in every shape which overflowed the land. Sophistry and infidelity imposing silence on timid virtue, and hating the light of truth, were themselves devoid of eloquence, "car on ne peut être éloquent dès qu'il faut s'abstenir de la vérité."

Voltaire, who is the greatest ornament of the age of incredulity and the most talented of the apostles of scepticism, is considered by his admirable compatriot, the Viscount de Chateaubriand, to have displayed his choicest eloquence in favour of the religion which he alternately attacked and defended; while he owes his glaring sin of inconsistency to the vanity which led him to head a party to which he was superior, and, for their sake, to deny truths of which he had probably an intimate conviction. What a monument is Voltaire of the nothingness of human greatness without

\* Madame de Staël.

the light of grace! All his intellect, his imagination and his learning only served to blind him to the truth; and the talent, whose only legitimate scope is to glorify God and benefit mankind, was, in his hand, the weapon which defied Omnipotence, and forbade Faith Hope, and Charity to dry the tears of suffering humanity.

Vanity and the talent of ridicule were the shoals on which he stranded his transcendant genius: with less of the former, he had not made himself court-jester in the anarchy of philosophy; with less of the latter, he had not been eligible to the post. He and his fellows have stretched the abuse of language to the utmost, and there is little to choose between learning, advocating error in the sophisms of the encyclopedists, and ignorance, invoking its own perdition in the appallingly blasphemous cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

The real use of language then is to glorify God, to alleviate human suffering by the expression of sympathy, and to enjoy the charms of society, which man alone can appreciate.

No where do we find so many beautiful examples of the relief afforded by language in

the out-pouring of human sorrow as in the Bible. From the lamentation of Cain the fratricide, "my punishment is greater than I can bear," to the holy mourning of the incarnate Saviour, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," all the griefs and troubles of the human heart have found incomparable interpretations in its inspired pages,—another evidence of the condescending goodness of the God who will "not bruise the broken reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

Precepts on this point are unnecessary. The spontaneous suggestions of our own hearts are the only possible guides to prayer, to the effusion of our own sorrows, or the expression of sympathy with those of others; for feeling is the source of the truest eloquence.

But, in society, language has other objects and other uses, which are but too little thought of, too rarely examined; and hence it is that the charm of conversation is so seldom felt in all its beauty.

How few persons are aware that they have a duty to perform in each word they utter! How many would exclaim at the insupportable severity of such a maxim! Yet it is for want

of this fundamental principle that conversation is so little instructive, so little agreeable, so often decidedly reprehensible. Society is not the place for didactic orations, abstruse arguments, or theological discussions, even among men; and women should scrupulously avoid assuming "learned airs," which are as unbecoming as they are ridiculous: but each should be impressed with the conviction on entering a drawing-room that she will either declare for virtue or for vice—for truth or falsehood—for God or Belial,—and this, whether the conversation be grave or gay.

The *motive* in this, as in all other things, is one of the first distinctions between right and wrong. If the subjects in agitation are of a serious nature, we take part in them, either from a laudable wish to contribute our mite to the treasury of knowledge and a sincere interest in the question, or from a love of display, and a desire to eclipse others in learning or eloquence. In the latter case, though we advocate the cause of truth itself, our conversation will always bear the taint of its false motives; we shall be arrogant, headstrong, contemptuous, when we should be gentle, firm, and charitable. The

man who chafes and frets at opposition, loads his adversary with contumely, and answers reasoning by ridicule, is not arguing for the love of truth, but for the sake of display, from party feeling or mere turbulence of temper: on the contrary, those who seek to maintain the truth, having first the love of it in their hearts, are careful not to bring obloquy on its cause, too good to need the support of intemperate declamation or pitiful sophistry. Discussion conducted in a right spirit ever tends towards truth, but silence is the best answer to self-sufficient ignorance and obstinate error.

On the other hand, where the conversation is of a trifling nature, the love of display which still creeps in brings in its train heartless raileries and mistimed levities, which pass for brilliancy and wit among those who never look beyond the surface. The true object of general conversation is the exchange of ideas, of what kind soever they may be, for mutual enjoyment or instruction.

To say nothing of the fact that there are often not two ideas to be found among a whole company, just observe how far the usual spirit of conversation is from affording even any plea-

sure to those engaged in it. Not satisfied with the confusion that arises from different interpretations of the same expression, men talk vehemently and lightly on whatever subject may present itself, scarcely seeking to understand each other, intent on displaying their own superiority, laying down principles from whose consequences they would be the first to start—professing opinions on which they would be the last to act: far from having the least notion of seeking any profit from the discussion, they are wholly occupied by the desire of shewing how much they really know, or concealing of how much they are profoundly ignorant; and the best proof of this seemingly uncharitable assertion is the mortification which the conviction of error always causes: without this, the simple-minded observer might mistake all the contentions and arguments which disturb society for a love of truth; but he is undeceived by finding that he who is delivered from an error, far from rejoicing at it, hides his diminished head in sullen silence; and when one of these professed talkers is really seized with a desire of instruction, selfishness being the basis of it, his curiosity becomes as impolite

and as troublesome as his communicativeness before had been; he overwhelms you with questions, scarcely waiting for the briefest answer, interrupts every digression which does not appear to serve his purpose of future display, and cross-examines you on every point with a rigor which he thinks will justify his appropriation of the information obtained. On such occasions, these worthies bear an astonishing resemblance to the emissaries of police under despotic governments.

Some persons make a strange division between themselves and their opinions: I confess that, in the simplicity of my heart, I have always considered the opinion and the man identical. What is opinion? Is it not a deduction drawn by reason from certain given principles to be the rule of conduct, if practical—the landmark of thought, if theoretical? In politics for instance: the principles of a certain party are presented to me,—my reason examines—my judgment approves—my will adopts them,—they become *my opinion*. How shall we separate the opinion from the man without separating him from his reason, his judgment, and his will? It is unfortunately but too easy:

we have only to suppose that he has adopted the opinion *on trust*.

Men are seldom so violent and overbearing in the support of their own opinions as in the defence of those they have borrowed or imitated from others: the mental operation which leads to their rational formation generally teaches us that other results might have been obtained by the same process—that the slightest flaw in our reasoning would have led us to far different conclusions, and that our theories, however sound, have their weak as well as their strong side.

Woman has a peculiar part assigned her in conversation, and, in harmony with the rest of her vocation, it is a secondary and retiring part. Her first influence on society is to banish violence and strife, impiety and decorum, and this by the simple effect of her presence.

Seeing that urbanity and decorum follow on her steps, should she not feel that her mission aims at the purification and elevation of man's character?

It is not enough, then, that conversation be no longer obscene or profane; topics must be introduced which tend indirectly to the support of our legitimate influence, which is prejudiced,

rather than benefitted, by the tone of frivolous gallantry which so many women mistake for homage to the sex.

In society, as in creation, woman's destiny is beyond herself, and she should no more seek to shine by her own light than to live for her own happiness; listening rather than speaking, and never drawing the eyes of a whole circle on herself, by emitting eccentric opinions or entering into warm arguments, she may still insensibly bias the conversation to noble and refined sentiments—a powerful but passive agent in the great work of human progress. If a woman possesses the talent of conversation, she should remember she is to exert it, like all other talents, subserviently to the proprieties of her position: display of any kind falls into the class of puerile vanities, when self-gratification is the object; but who will be severe in condemning it, when its scope is to honor the choice which has first honored us? I never can repeat too often, that woman to be graceful must be strictly feminine; every thought, word, and deed, which has self for its ultimate end, is eminently unfeminine.

“He for God only, she for God in him,”  
is an admirable definition of woman's rank in

society, and a sense of it should accompany her “from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve,” and bound all her ambition. The most thoughtless and superficial have a practical consciousness of its limits, which is sufficiently exhibited in the universal dislike excited by what is called “*a masculine woman*,”—as much an object of aversion to women, whose interests she betrays, as to men, on whose privileges she infringes.

For these reasons, as well as from our decided inferiority of intellect, many topics of conversation are interdicted to us.

The same law which excludes us from the study of the sciences (because their end is the instruction of mankind rather than self-improvement) imposes silence with regard to many other themes. Politics, for instance, are a most unbecoming subject for female lips: they are generally beyond our comprehension; their discussion excites too much rancor, and involves too much personality, and the very mention of them is an encroachment on the ground devoted to publicity, and reserved to men.

Polemics, for nearly the same reasons, are equally inadmissible. In general literature and the arts, in the progress of civilisation in the

various parts of the world, and in intelligent observation of men and manners, we may find ample and fitting subjects of conversation, and even improvement, provided the love of display be banished from our minds; its existence in others, far from exciting our rivalry, should turn to our own advantage.

When conversation becomes frivolous, it is easier to point out what to avoid than what to choose. The weather, the fashion, and even domestic grievances, are favorite topics with some persons; and if those with whom you converse are manifestly incapable of any thing better, listen to them with patience, assume no censorious airs of superiority, but seek a more profitable interlocutor as soon as politeness permits. Discussion of the affairs of others is always as dangerous as it is unbecoming and ill-bred: our judgments on them are seldom cool or impartial, and even when we are guided by discretion, it is rare that the parties in question are gainers by our animadversions, while we ourselves are sure to be the losers in the esteem of all persons possessed of delicacy and *savoir vivre*.

Nothing depraves the taste, or indicates

paucity of intelligence, more than the habit of turning all things into ridicule : no habit makes more enemies or poisons more pleasures. There is a time to laugh, and a time to weep ; there are things, and even persons, calculated to excite merriment ; but I almost doubt whether there be any legitimate object for habitual ridicule. All the foibles of human nature are too much our own—its errors are too serious an evil.

Raillery is a weapon which in skilful hands may advance the cause of truth ; but it is the gentlest form of ridicule : as it supposes both good humour and good faith, it is far less objectionable, and differs from it in seeking less to mortify than to convince.

Ridicule spares no object, however little ridiculous, and will find as much food in the learning of the scholar as in the folly of the fool. An indulgence of this vice so corrupts the taste, and even warps the judgment, that a person who is in the habit of laughing at every thing would seek in vain the more delicate shades of intellectual enjoyment : the noble, the beautiful, and the sublime exist no more for him who sees all things through a

distorted medium,—words lose their true signification, and an absurd idea is coupled with every sentiment.

No nation understands pleasantry less than our own, of which fact our comedies are the best proof: they are replete either with pungent satire or revolting coarseness, both farther from reforming the manners they criticize than the most tedious sermon would be; in the former class, the exaggeration of the portrait prevents our recognizing ourselves in the personage represented; while the latter tends chiefly to sanction and increase the natural coarseness of the lower ranks.

This digression leads me to observe nearly the same defects in the pleasantry of the drawing-room, which too often takes the form of sarcasm, or of *double entendre*. The former, however gentle, is dangerous; we may wound a susceptibility of whose existence we were ignorant, and make an enemy at every breath. As to the latter, let nothing induce you to tolerate the society of those who indulge so debasing and disgusting a propensity; for the simple reason that it is an unquestionable evidence of impurity of mind and laxity of morals.

As to calumny and scandal, the very shadow of its shade should be abhorrent to the soul of woman. Against whom shall we spend our strength?—against man? He may bid *us* defiance on most subjects, while one word from him—nay, his very silence—has the power of blasting *us* for ever. Against whom shall we lance our venom?—against woman? Alas! have we no pity for the weaknessess which are at once our “strength and shield?” But if we have none, let us remember that our first prerogative is gone for ever when we renounce the mission of love and mercy on which we are sent. The woman who errs is culpable; but she was tempted before she fell, while she who points the finger of scorn at her shame sins in cold blood and without temptation, and, far from establishing a reputation for virtue, gives rise to the suspicion that she has not herself a scriptural right to “cast the first stone.”

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## LETTER VIII.

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ON THE AFFECTIONS, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF  
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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Most people, and especially the young and the gay, attach an inseparable idea of gloom and sadness to the word "religion," and suppose that its very utterance is to damp their cheerfulness, and curtail their enjoyments. And with respect to the affections, few are aware how much of their elevation, their purity, and their durability they owe to the Christian dispensation. We are apt to take as a matter of course the state of things which we find to exist, on first contemplating society and its manners and usages, and, at best, we are wont to attribute our own advantages to an advanced stage of civilization, rather than to the direct or indirect influence of revelation. But let us endeavour to view, as it were at a glance, the

history of our race, and the benefits we have derived and are still deriving from Christianity.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. He made man in his own image, and gave him an help meet for him; but man sinned by disobedience, and incurred the curse of death, temporal and eternal; then He who had brought no remedy to the fall of angels promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,—thus divine love appeared on the threshold of creation.

Ages rolled on. Man multiplied and filled the face of the earth, and sin also increased and provoked the indignation of the Most High, but messengers of love were not wanting; the dove bare the olive branch back to the ark, wandering over submerged creation, and the rainbow spread over the waters of the deluge its radiant promise, that there should "no more be a flood to destroy the earth." Yet "every imagination of the thought of man's heart was only evil continually;" and save the posterity of Abraham, all turned aside from the living God to serve idols of wood and stone. Families became nations—cities were built, whose towers might reach to heaven—kingdoms

were founded—arts and sciences progressed—commerce flourished; man, whom the love of his Creator had declared lord of all—man conquered three of the four elements to his service,—he traversed the seas, and tore up the bowels of the earth in quest of the gold which had become his idol, and earth being insufficient to supply his wants, or satisfy his thirst after knowledge, he interrogated the lights of distant worlds, and they became his guides across the desert, whose fierce inhabitants submitted to his reason.

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Nimrod and the Assyrians had passed away,—Alexander had left his kingdom to be rent asunder by his successors,—Carthage had fallen, and Rome filled the universe; from north to south, from east to west, all nations bowed to the city of the seven hills; but Force was the bond of unity—Slavery was the basis of society; the world was conquered, and sold into captivity: and while the philosopher declared that the slave is subject to the master, as matter is to spirit, the poets tell us that for the helot there were no gods; if the laws protected them, it was as property not as indi-

viduals. Pride, cruelty, vengeance, and hereditary hatred were virtues; suicide, legal; and prostitution, a religious rite! Such was the glory of the Augustan age.

Four thousand years had man been left to the sole guidance of his excellent but insufficient reason, and such were its corrupt fruits. Save the remnant to whom eternal truth had been first confided and constantly revealed, all nations had imbrued their hands in the blood of human sacrifices—polluted their temples with obscene rites—exposed helpless infancy to perish—and delighted in the contemplation of human agony. But the ways of God are inscrutable. The tyranny of the Capitol had bowed all nations under one common yoke, and Augustus, finding none capable of resistance or worthy of defeat, closed the temple of Janus, and proclaimed with cruel irony a universal peace to the world in chains: yet morally and physically all was in reality at war,—in politics, in philosophy, in religion, all was discord and inequality. The many languished in slavery, ignorance, and degradation, while the few enjoyed the elegancies of life, the pleasures of refined immorality, the plenitude of the arts and

sciences, and all the privileges of the "golden age."

In the midst of this universal corruption tradition had preserved the faint outlines of fundamental truth; men worshipped Jove, Brama, Thor, Astarte, Apis—but no nation was without a god; and the notions of guilt, and the consequent necessity of expiation, were perceptible in innumerable rites, though so confused and corrupted that they served rather to mislead than to guide. . . .

. . . The measure of iniquity was full, for "the abomination that maketh the desolate" was in the high places of the earth. What was to regenerate the human species? Reason? it had proved unavailing.—Force? who could compete with the power of Rome? Love, divine and eternal love, was to be the source of national, individual, and spiritual regeneration, as it had been the first principle of creation. Man, in sinning, had not only lost all, but he had incurred an infinite debt; and when Eternal Justice asked of heaven's assembled choirs,

"Which of you will be mortal to redeem  
Man's mortal crime, and just the unjust to save?"

Dwells in all heaven charity so dear ?  
 . . . . . On man's behalf  
 Patron or intercessor none appeared ;  
 Much less that durst upon his own head draw  
 The deadly forfeiture."

And but for eternal love the world had then  
 been doubly lost ; but God's own Son

" His dearest mediation thus renew'd :  
 Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace ;

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*

Behold me then ; me for him, life for life  
 I offer ; on me let thine anger fall ;  
 Account me man. I for his sake will leave  
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee  
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die  
 Well pleas'd ;" . . . . .

The Son of God—equal with His Father as  
 touching the Godhead—is he who is to regen-  
 erate the lost world ; and doubtless He will  
 come on the clouds of heaven, exterminating  
 his enemies, and opening the ways of truth  
 with the flaming sword of his just wrath,—  
 myriads of angels will accompany him, and he  
 will appear in power and glory !

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In a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, there  
 dwells a virgin, of the lineage of David, whose  
 name is Mary. A decree from Cæsar Augustus,

that all the world should be taxed, sends her thence to Bethlehem, where the fulness of time being come, she brings forth her first born son, and lays him in a manger, *because there is no room for them in the inn.* And the child waxes strong in spirit, and the grace of God is upon him; but he dwells in Nazareth with his parents, and is subject unto them. And when he is about thirty years of age, he is baptized of John in the river Jordan, and a fame of him goes through all the region round about; but he preaches humility, charity, self-denial, chastity; he commands men, as one having authority, to renounce pleasure, riches, honors, power, and wisdom, and to become “as little children;” he prefers the poor to the rich—the simple to the learned—the sorrowful to them that rejoice—the slave to his master,—and for these doctrines, and for casting out devils, opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, healing the sick, and raising the dead, he is accused of sedition! An armed band go by night to seize on the person of one whose life, as well as his doctrine, had been gentleness itself; he is led before Caiaphas and Pilate, who “find no fault in him,” but deliver him

to the people ; he is scourged, crucified between two thieves, and dies, exclaiming, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !"

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The *fat lux* of first creation is surpassed. The ignorant fishermen of Galilee, whom Jesus of Nazareth had chosen as his disciples, have risen up, and confounded the kings and princes of the earth. The kingdom of Christ Jesus is established by love—cemented by love—maintained by love. Persecuted, despised, hated—cast into the arena to be devoured by wild beasts—massacred "to make a Roman holiday," his subjects still increase and multiply. Slavery disappears from the earth—all men are declared brothers ;—a second unity is formed of almost as mighty parts as the empire of Augustus ; but instead of chains it is bound by love ! Vices and virtues change their names—pride becomes a sin—humility a virtue—hatred and vengeance are forbidden,—vows of perpetual virginity replace legal prostitution—sacrifices are abolished, for the great sacrifice is accomplished, and the blood of Christ has answered to the blood of Abel, which cried to Jehovah from the ground. . . . .

. . . And the ministry of Love has replaced the institutions and the civilisation which the Goths and Vandals had destroyed. The basis of its influence is a miracle, for it has taught men to respect the symbol of ignominy—**THE CROSS**—and this simple emblem of unheard-of love becomes the asylum of innocence and destitution,—the altars where it is placed are inviolable sanctuaries, its ministers, heralds of peace. “The love of Christ provides convents and hermitages to receive the traveller where no hostels exist—hospitals for infancy, decrepitude, and sickness—monasteries where the sciences are preserved, as in an ark, during the deluge of barbarism. And when the mis-directed energy of society in its infancy manifests itself in incessant bloodshed and feudal war, the cross is the standard which bidding the fratricidal storm be still leads Europe forth against the ferocious enemies of Christ, repulses the crescent from the walls of the Holy City and from the shores of Spain and Sicily.”\*

But it is not only on earth that the power of divine love has wrought miracles, greater than those of primeval creation. The love of

\* Cantù, *Hist. Universelle*, vol. vii. Introduction.

God the Son towards man led to His infinite humiliation, and the love of God the Father has rewarded Him. Let Milton once more speak :

“ Because in thee  
*Love hath abounded more than glory abounds,*  
*Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt*  
*With thee thy manhood also to this throne.*  
Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign  
Both God and man, Son both of God and man,  
Anointed universal King.”

Thus love has raised manhood in the person of Christ to the throne of Omnipotence. Love is the source both of original creation and of the still more glorious work of redemption. These wonders were not prompted by pride, hatred, revenge, envy, or jealousy, and the God who is said to be angry, and even jealous, is never called “ anger” or “ jealousy,” but “ the disciple whom Jesus loved tells us that ‘ God is Love.’ ”

Who does not recognize love, charity, friendship, in its sublimest forms in the accomplishment of man’s redemption? Not content with being made man that he might redeem us, Christ assumed the flesh in the most painful conditions of humanity : subject to all our infirmities, exposed to all our temptations, and more than all our privations, He not only com-

pleted the work of salvation, but left the inestimable benefits of Christianity impressed on the face of creation, and bequeathed its immense temporal advantages even to unbelieving nations.

This is not the time or place to enter into an enumeration of all those advantages which, after the view we have been taking of mankind, will present themselves readily enough to your mind. But the point I would here especially dwell on is the purification of the earthly affections, under the influence of Christianity as contrasted with heathenism, and the beauty and charm imparted to them by the Christian tenet of the immortality of the soul.

Far from denying us the solace of friendship and affection, He, who so loved the world, bade us also "love one another," not to an immoderate and idolatrous degree, but with that pure and holy sentiment on which we may fearlessly ask His blessing: and as this subject is open to much misinterpretation, it may be well here to notice a deficiency of our language (calculated to multiply misunderstandings), in which two Greek words are translated by the single word *love*—the one being the pure and

holy feeling so strongly inculcated in the First Epistle of St. John, and the other being the passion, more generally implied and understood in the word *love*. To avoid alike repetitions and misconceptions, let me here remind you that I use the word love *throughout this letter* in the former sense, as more intelligible than its only substitute *charity*.

Nor would I, even with these restrictions, institute any comparison between the love of God and the love of man : but I would say with St. John, " If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

For as the love of God is the source of creation and redemption, with all its blessings, so the love of man, or charity in the abstract (which is an exclusively Christian virtue), is the principle which, under different forms, takes the sweet and holy names of patriotism, benevolence, mercy, pity, friendship, patience, forgiveness, and " long-suffering." Love is the only passion which, under any of its aspects, has the good of others for its scope. All those sentiments which take their root in pride (such as ambition, hatred, anger, revenge) require to be strongly chastened and corrected to be vir-

tuous: love alone needs but a right direction, and its vehemence increases its beauty and its merit.

“The root of all good is love (or charity) as the root of all evil is pride; and friendship, one of our noblest sentiments, owes its chief attraction to charity. Christianity, in revealing our double nature, is, like us, full of contrasts, presenting to us the Son of God, born of a woman—the Lord of all worlds an infant in swaddling clothes—and under this aspect, it is peculiarly the religion of friendship, a sentiment which is fortified as much by opposition, as by similarity of character.”\* Where among the ancients was the affection which lightens the burden of affliction for the Christian? The certainty of an immortal future, and the spectacle of *a world redeemed by love*, were wanting to give sublimity to all their sentiments; and those who are familiar with the classics will tell you what revolting immorality often assumed, among them, the sacred name of friendship: but even among the moderns, it is too little understood, and too lightly given. True friendship requires, in both parties, recti-

\* Chateaubriand.

tude of mind, sincerity of temper, and generosity of soul: it does not always suppose a conformity of opinions, but a conformity of principles is indispensable. The humours may be opposed, but the tastes must agree; there may be great contrast of temper, but there must be the same sensibility. The *perfection* of friendship can only exist between persons of cultivated understanding; but it then affords a communion of hearts, warmed by the same affections of minds cast in the same mould, of souls animated by the same hope of eternal life, which may be ranked among the highest of temporal blessings. I can testify by experience that it tempers all the storms of adversity, and alleviates both physical and mental suffering; for, through all my vicissitudes, I have basked in the sunshine of that inestimable friendship which hushed my first slumbers, presented me at the baptismal font, soothed the first deep sorrow of my heart, seconded, though half a hemisphere divided us, the developement of my mind, and, unchanged by time, absence, adversity and even by the differences which like summer storms have arisen between us, still pours the balm of sympathy on every wound,

and cheers me on to the fulfilment of every duty. But such a sentiment is not the growth of an hour. Attracted by an inexpressible impulse to a patient observance of each other's character, impelled to a thousand sets of spontaneous kindness and bound by ties that long remain unacknowledged, true friendship is commonly manifested by some sudden blow, some thunderbolt which, reducing fortune or happiness to ruins, reveals the sublime affection which emulates the love of God himself, who, loving man when innocent, gave himself to die for him when guilty: and though all are not destined to pass through the fiery ordeal of affliction, few are wholly exempt from the trials and reverses which are the test of friendship; and that none, in mistaken austerity, might refuse themselves the solace of this pure affection, Christ gave us in his own person a bright example, and for ever hallowed the name of friendship among his followers. Of his disciples, John was the one whom Jesus loved—it was on his bosom that he leaned at the Last Supper—it was John who accompanied him in his agony in the garden, and who alone followed him to the foot of the cross; it was to

John that his last injunction was addressed,—a cry of filial tenderness, mingled with the confidence of friendship,—in the touching apostrophe, “Woman, behold thy son! Disciple, behold thy mother !”

But, before I conclude these remarks on the affections, you will perhaps expect me to contemplate friendship under a form which is still more suited to the complex constitution of our nature—I mean love in the common acceptance of the term. The extreme delicacy of the subject presents innumerable difficulties to a female pen ; and if the observations in my first letter were intelligible, it will be in a great measure unnecessary to recur to them. Should I, indeed, have succeeded in impressing generally on your mind the great moral truths and advantages of Christianity, the true and delicate love of a Christian will form itself so naturally within your heart, as to need neither precept nor exhortation of mine to aid its developement. It has been justly said, that Christianity alone could inspire the noble and elevated passion attributed by Milton to our first parents. “ In all other poems,” says Voltaire, “ love is regarded as a weakness : in Milton it

is a virtue;\*” he raises it, not above human nature, but above fallen nature. And how, indeed, could the affections assume an elevated character among nations who disbelieved or doubted the immortality of the soul? “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” was their philosophy, and its debasing influence was felt especially by the weaker sex.

It is said, that “friendship is love without his wings,” I would say, that “love is friendship with the addition of *exclusiveness*.” The same harmonies and diversities of character are necessary in both—the same confidence—the same frankness—the same devotion; but while in friendship our attachments lead us to sacrifice our happiness *to others*, in love, such is the exclusiveness of the passion, that far from recognizing a plurality of objects, it very often may be said to renounce even its own proper identity. In friendship we know and bear with the defects of others—in love we know, and almost love them. The aspect of a friendly face, the tones of a friendly voice, are sweet to the heart of friendship; but in love there is a feeling at times almost akin to fear in the sen-

\* Essai sur la Poesie Epique, ch. ix.

sation caused by the accents, the presence of one we love . . . . . But love is a mystery—a subject too difficult for my pen—a science in which the untaught are often the most learned: watch over your own heart lest, in your love of even legitimate objects, you should transgress the commandment—"Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them."



## LETTER IX.

## CONCLUSION.

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“ I returned and saw under the sun, that the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

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ALL the wisdom of the wise cannot secure you from the common lot; the thing that hath been is that which shall be: neither youth, rank, or riches can preserve you from making acquaintance with grief.

“ All things in nature have their affinities; zephyrs to the spring, tempests to the winter, and *sorrow to the heart of man* :”\* and it has not been from negligence that I have omitted to touch this mournful but harmonious chord, it has not been from ignorance that I have

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\* Chateaubriand.

refrained from dwelling on this theme: it has been from the conviction that sorrow is so interwoven with life itself that, rather than form a separate matter of discussion, it should be a summary of the whole.

To finely constituted minds, to souls conscious of their immortality, the world has neither heedless gaiety nor hopeless sadness.

The more elevated sentiments which occupy the heart of woman are as far removed from confidence as from despair, but the general tone of reflective and affectionate temperaments inclines to melancholy; not the morbid selfish feeling which turns all our compassion on ourselves, but the vague, gentle melancholy which makes us sigh rather than smile in contemplating the most enchanting scenes of nature, and in witnessing the noblest impulses of the human heart.

The law which has made a tear the interpreter alike of grief and gladness has made the extremes of happiness and of misery, of weakness and of strength, of vice and virtue, to meet in the heart of woman. The passions of man lose in intensity what they gain in variety; but if woman attains the summit of virtue or the

abyss of vice, it is her ruling passion which raises or precipitates her: no rank, no station exempts her from this fate. Mary Stuart dies on the scaffold—Elizabeth Tudor dies on the cushions of her throne; but Darnley sharpened the axe of the executioner—Essex poisoned the arrows of remorse—and Love had delegated his power to both.

I have spoken to you of love; I have endeavoured to point out the unworthy and ephemeral impressions which so frequently usurp the name, not to teach you to love—alas!—that science is not taught, and often were better far unlearnt!—but to warn you against the misinterpretation, the blame, the scandal, to which this perversion of terms gives rise: and there may be those who will tell you that my ideas on the subject are fantastical, exaggerated, dangerous. But if any sentiment be laudable in its mediocrity, can the elevation and perfection of that sentiment be blameable? If it be right that a woman should love her husband, is it wrong that she should love him with her heart, and soul, and mind? If conjugal love can inspire invincible fortitude, if maternal love can inspire superhuman courage, if filial

love can inspire intrepid devotion, can we too much exalt a sentiment which does more to purify and ennoble human nature than pride, ambition, and avarice can ever do to debase it?

Sorrow mingles with all the joys of that existence beyond ourselves, which the wife, the mother, so well appreciates: the passion belongs to immortality, its object is mortal; its delights are evanescent, its sufferings leave their traces where they pass; each heart-ache blights a flower of that spring to which time brings no return. And the solution of this problem is at once the despair and hope of the heart that loves. Love, as it exists in elevated and generous minds, is the faint image of that admiration which originally had perfection and immortality for its sole object; and woman, who "first tempted man to sin," has retained the liveliest remembrance of primeval happiness, and the keenest sensibility to its loss. How then shall she who loves be exempt from sorrow? and what shall bring consolation or relief?

I can propose no other passion to you, for it is the only one of which we are capable; the only one which, in no virtuous form, can misbe-

come us. If religion be rejected, all that can be done is to counterbalance its power by developing the mind, and to this my councils will ever tend; not that reason is contrary to love, as I understand and have endeavoured to describe it—for it is as reasonable to love what is loveable as to hate what is hateful—but because reason tempers the violence of our passions by opposing a greater resistance in the will, restraining excess in their outward manifestations. Superiority of mind in woman may become, in one sense, an obstacle to her happiness. Her lot in creation is to complete the existence of another, and not to exist for herself alone. The affections are her empire; and the error of our intelligence is to apply to the heart and its emotions all the force of our reason, criticism, and research: but love is a compound of spirit and matter, and one is wholly unintelligible to the other; the reason which would reconcile them is defeated and dismayed, and the suffering consequent on this *misapplication* of her mental powers is the penalty woman pays for an exceptional superiority.

Most people set out in life with the idea that happiness is their right; that they have

*done nothing to deserve misfortune.* Instead of looking on sorrow as one of the contingents of our state, we dare not even contemplate it as a possibility. The consequence is, that when it arrives it not only surprises us, unprepared either for submission or resignation, but it offends or displeases us. We think ourselves ill-used, and by fretting and repining so enervate our minds, that we have neither fortitude nor faith to bear up against the storm.

It is as impossible, as it is inexpedient, for us to be indifferent to vicissitudes. In nature, the thunder storm which devastates the country and strikes terror into the heart of man has its salutary effects, and confers its benefits, even in the midst of destruction. In politics, the revolutions which overturn thrones and break up the foundations of social order are but instruments in the hands of providence for accomplishing certain beneficial ends. So affliction has its mission to perform, even morally speaking; and surely he is doubly wretched who not only endures chastisement, but endures it to no purpose. When it is received in a sullen or impatient spirit, as an injustice to our imaginary merits, rather than as a correc-

tive to our real faults, its end may be *for a time* defeated by our obstinate presumption ; and a long succession of trouble is then but a repetition of the plagues of Egypt : the heart is hardened more and more, and “ the death of the first-born ” is necessary to rouse us to a sense of our nothingness in His hands.

I would impress on you that none are exempt from trials ; that sorrow has a mission which our arrogance or insensibility may be permitted to retard ; that religion brings the only effectual consolation ; but that even without religion it has its advantages, and even its solaces, if we receive it in a right spirit.

As a woman, as a wife, as a mother, many an affliction is reserved for you ; the profound affections, the rare sensibility incident to these ties, are sources of equal pain and pleasure. When Violence banished Pity from the earth, woman assumed her semblance, and undertook her office ; but her heart is like the myrtle which must be crushed ere it will yield its choicest fragrance.

All the wisdom of antiquity was insufficient to derive happiness from even virtuous affections, or to afford true consolation to grief.

The stoics, driven from one outpost to another, ended by commanding the annihilation of the former, and denying the existence of the latter : and modern philosophy could have done no more, had not another light broken in on creation, and a voice declared, "This is my beloved Son—HEAR HIM!"

The advocates of human *perfectibility* are at fault when they overlook the share which Christianity has had in the progress of the human mind : in admiring its steady course in the Christian countries of Europe and of America, they pass over in silence its stationary or retrograde state elsewhere. Have Africa, Asia, South America made one step in two thousand years, save under the auspices of Christianity ? They forget in their enumeration of the legislators and philosophers who have enlightened and benefitted mankind, to mention one who, far from availing Himself of the discoveries of those who had preceded Him, overthrew their systems, and despised their wisdom ; neglecting even the usual ornaments of eloquence, His word was simple and unadorned, but "powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword."

Before His appearance on earth, men knew

no better refuge from sorrow than in stoicism or suicide. When pursued by adversity, the ancients flattered at once their vanity and their superstition by imagining that they had become objects of hatred and persecution to some one of the immoral and perverse deities to whom they attributed all their own worst passions and vices. The Christian, on the contrary, submits to "his Father which is in heaven," knowing that affliction is the furnace in which the people of God are refined and purified as silver.

Plato proposed, in his republic, the annihilation of natural affections by the community of wives and children: Cicero says that tears become only the weakness of woman;—at the grave of Lazarus "JESUS wept!"

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I have endeavoured in the preceding letters, to pourtray to you woman's vocation on earth; to show, in brief sketches, how it was lost sight of in the dark ages of heathenism—revealed by the light of Christianity: I have lamented the misconception of her true vocation, so common in the present day; and I have sought to con-

vince you that we neglect the many temporal advantages of Christianity, when we content ourselves with the lowest relative position possible in the existing state of society. I have laid down as a principle that high morality, cultivation of the mind, and the legitimate self-esteem consequent on both, are indispensable, if we would resume the place assigned us in creation. All agree in approving learning in men; but there are irreconcilable differences, even among the most liberal minded, as to its utility for women. It seems to me that no doubt could ever have arisen on the subject, had they not too often forgotten, in their thirst after knowledge, that the great end of their existence is not in themselves but in another. No talent, however transcendent, can exempt us from this law, without involving us in miseries and improprieties of every description; and the moment a woman oversteps the limits of that instruction which contributes to render us better wives and better mothers, she becomes an object of aversion to her own sex, and of ridicule to all.

But it is as contrary to common sense as to experience, to suppose that a well-directed and

solid education is less conducive to morality and virtue than a few superficial and desultory acquirements, whose *only* result is the development of an inordinate vanity. As no degree of cultivation suffices to produce talent, so no degree of neglect can annul it where it exists ; and a fine mind allowed to run wild will lead much farther astray than the greatest abuse mediocrity can invent for the gifts of education.

Happily your husband is not to be reckoned among the number of narrow-minded and short-sighted mortals who, dreading superiority in a wife, choose "a spaniel fool," without foreseeing that she will probably turn out "mule fool" in the end : and I believe his affection for you to be so sincere, that he will rejoice in your laying by a store of attractions for the winter of your years ; for, beauty once withered, what tie binds those whose minds are a desert ? It is vain to plead the equality of your ages ; woman is old when she has lost the bloom of her skin, the roundness of her limbs, the elasticity of her step ; man is young till he is decrepit. Love may blind him to the fading of your beauty, *provided it be not the original and sole attraction* ; but if he never

read the purity of your soul in your countenance, the fire of intelligence in your glance, the dignity of conscious virtue in your mien, what remains for him to love "when age sits wrinkling on the brow, that erst was beauty's throne?"

Finally, I have ventured to raise my voice in defence of the much belied and much misconstrued passion, of which alone we are properly susceptible.

I have endeavoured to extol the love of God, as revealed in the scheme of atonement, and to pourtray, as derived therefrom, the love of our fellow-creatures, as I find it in my own heart; not to derogate from the former, but to exalt the latter; not to justify our excesses and failings, but to show that the principle is, in its own nature, purifying and divine, and that when its effects in us are contrary, it is our corruption that is the cause, the medium alone that is in fault.

I have combatted the frivolous and superficial views of men and things in which you have been brought up, calling in the aid of reasoning and philosophy; and have constantly aimed at showing how superior all wisdom and

all virtue appears when illumined by Christianity, of which I fervently desire to see you a meek yet brilliant ornament.

To argue the truth of revelation were unnecessary with one who does not profess to doubt it; to urge its practical doctrines were useless with one who is insensible to its authority; I have taken refuge in morality and reasoning, but I have aimed at showing that the chief corner-stone of both is the Gospel.

I have, in fact, stood up in defence of truth—not religious truth which you neglect without attacking—but moral, philosophic truth, which has been outraged in your education, and banished from your mind to make way for every species of vanity and deception: but as the subjects of our correspondence are in themselves inexhaustible, I have prescribed certain limits to myself for these first letters, in order that you may meditate on what I have advanced, and give me your impressions on the different and important points we have discussed.

Hitherto I have aimed at combining conciseness with perspicuity; I have endeavoured to give on each head only the principles that

were most fundamental, the proofs that were most convincing: I feared to weary you by prolixity, and to weaken my arguments by diffuseness. But now that I draw to a conclusion, I feel all the insufficiency of my pen: while I wrote I hoped by future zeal to compensate for present short comings; now that I have finished my correspondence I would fain recal the past, and retread the path where so many flowers of truth and buds of beauty might still be gathered. I feel, as I have often felt when leaving the shores of classic Italy, imbued with souvenirs of her past grandeur, her present misery, her undying beauty,—that my sojourn in those realms has been too brief, my appreciation of them too lukewarm; and I long to retrace the steps which enthusiasm and admiration have rendered too often precipitate.

Had I advocated any other cause, my pleading would have been stronger in itself than its subject, and self-love might have reaped a less niggard harvest: but I have embraced the cause of truth; and the love of it in the heart teaches the “stammerer to speak plainly,” and “the tongue of the dumb to sing;” while its influence on the mind is to convince

us where we succeed it is our cause which triumphs over our weakness—where we fail it is our weakness that betrays our cause.

Alas! that the power should not be always equal to the will: alas! that those who know and love the truth, with all its sublime and beneficent consequences, should not possess the boldness of Paul, the skill of Demosthenes, the logic of Cicero, the eloquence of all three! “But the first shall be last, and the last shall be first; for out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise!”

FINIS.

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